

# GANDHI & THE YOUTH

BY  
S. RAMANATHAN

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BOMBAY.

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## P R E F A C E

The first edition of this book was printed on hand-made paper and had a limited circulation. Most of the readers, although they agreed substantially with the ideas in the book, thought that my language was rather exaggerated and, in places, disrespectful to the leaders. I entrusted the task of revision to some who are more than friends to me and among whom may be counted some of the ablest men in the country. I should not name them. They have laboured at the task of correcting the book notwithstanding their intense dislike to be associated with my opinions. Out of sheer affection for me, they put themselves for a while in my place and suggested numerous amendments to express my thoughts in better language. I cannot find words to express my gratitude to them. Almost all the amendments suggested have been incorporated in this, the second, edition, and I especially hope that no one will be personally hurt by anything said in the following pages; for, I am concerned in this book with principles and not with persons. This edition contains additional material. The title of the first edition of the book was "League of Youth" which is the subject of the first chapter. The fifth chapter, "Epilogue," is new.

India is a vast question mark which confronts humanity. It is a confused medley of races, creeds and languages. Will this mix-up ultimately result in a harmony attuned to the purposes common to all mankind or will it lead to perpetual civil war or worse? That is the question that India, with her teeming millions, poses to the post-Hitler World. Superficially, the problem of India appears to be the problem of religious conflict caused by the antithesis of Hinduism and Islam. The lazy, uninvestigating mind cries out for a Hindu-Muslim agreement as the simple and final solution of the Indian problem. It is forgotten that this desirable object of Hindu-Muslim unity cannot be achieved by merely raising the slogan and setting up a hue and cry for its achievement. The thinking mind needs must probe

the roots of the trouble and investigate the causes which have led to the present conflict. The solution of the problem demands, as a preliminary step, the unravelling of the various trends and events which have led to the tangle. Before we set out to achieve "Unity", we must discover how the differences have come about.

I have endeavoured to show in this book that the conflict is not one which has been brought about merely by religious differences between Hindus and Muslims, although it has been connected by artificial means with the mass hysteria that religious conflicts evoke among the illiterate all the world over and at all times in history. Fundamentally, the conflict is one of political ideologies which are of recent origin and centre round the teachings of Gandhi who is irrevocably wedded to the principle of revivalism which, if it prevails, will change the face of India and of the World. Hindu India is dominated by Gandhi's personality and is powerless to resist his principle, although thinking heads among them shy at it. Non-Hindu India has reacted variously to the challenge of Gandhism. Jinnah has come out as Gandhi's most determined opponent and has served as the nucleus of the opposition. Jinnah is to-day the opposite of Gandhi in every respect. These two personalities, Gandhi and Jinnah, are however the front and the obverse of the same coin. The ideology of Gandhism has evoked the counter-ideology of Jinnahism. Each expresses the reality that is India but in a partial way. The truth in each is hidden by his one-sided abstraction. The thesis that is Gandhi leads to an antinomy. To understand its full import, it has to be set side by side with its anti-thesis that is Jinnah. We belittle Jinnah at our peril. We cannot cure a fever by breaking the thermometer. Pakistan is the cry of agony that humanity in India has uttered in its anguish. The sorrow must abate if the cry is to cease.

Gandhism is a psychological complex created by the British advent which has brought about the

few traders. These traders, owing to a historical accident, were in possession of superior military equipment and managed to capture the State machinery of a vast continent. Side by side with commercial exploitation, the traders were obliged, willynilly, to administer the State machine. The State, in course of time and partly for its own safety and protection, reproduced in India some of the changes brought about in the West by a progressive human civilization, and gradually ushered in many features of modern life like the railways, the telegraphs, the cotton and jute mills and so on. The population of India, steeped in poverty and misery caused by the foreign advent, looked with apprehension at these innovations which they attributed to the foreign Government, not realising that any Government, whether indigenous or foreign, could scarcely help introducing them. Hence, it came about that there was an intense mass hatred of railways, mills and machinery which Gandhi imbibed and dignified into a political creed. This creed based on an irrational fear has become the core of Indian nationalism as organised under the flag of the Congress. It is an unfortunate diversion of human energy which might otherwise have been devoted to fruitful action for raising the standard of living of the Indian masses. While the whole world outside India is endeavouring to make life more and more comfortable for human beings by yoking scientific advancement to the mass production of all commodities, we in India have been forced to tread the opposite path of boycott of science and modern knowledge and the revival of dead or decaying industries. This Gandhian revivalism expressed through the Congress lends powerful support to the vested interests which put on the religious garb. It gives solace and strength not merely to capitalism and big business, but to the survivals of medieval feudalism which haunt India in the seven lakhs of her villages. Rural India has been stratified and kept as a willing prey to exploitation by the institution of Caste which divides humanity into a series of rural workers wedded to handicrafts. The

Gandhian movement for the revival of the Charkha and other handicrafts is but a gigantic attempt to reconstruct the Caste system and its medieval economy.

If the above diagnosis of the problem is correct, what is the solution? Wherein lies the hope of efficient action to prevent the catastrophe of economic suicide by one-fifth of humanity? Apparently, there is no element in the political life of India which can organise a movement to suppress the reaction in Indian politics. I see no hope for my country in any of the organised political parties. Each of them is held prisoner within its own narrow creed and has got itself hopelessly involved in its own particular slogans. While the people's suffering and bitterness are increasing, there seems to be no prospect of constitutional remedy as the political parties are engrossed in their mutual squabbles. A dangerous situation is developing which may well lead to a bloody revolution, which will be all the more dreadful because it will be guided by no organised political party. India, always the poorest country in the world, is fast sinking into a state of abysmal destitution and misery which beggar description. The people are huddled in rural and urban slums. They go about naked and eat food shunned even by the animals. Such appalling conditions would have burst the bonds of law and order in any other country. But peace has been maintained in India by the strength of religion which holds out shining rewards in heaven above for all sufferings endured here below. But this trick will not work any longer. The spread of knowledge in the rest of the world is having its effects in India as well. In essential respects, humanity is one body and functions as one mind. War and peace are universal, and so are prosperity and misery, health and disease. If India bursts into flame, there will be danger to humanity as serious as another global war. Psychological atom bombs may prove as disastrous as the physical. America paid in blood for her misguided policy of isolationism in the twenties and early thirties. The world will have to pay a bigger price if it practises isolationism towards India.

The world may or may not heed this warning, but it is up to us in India to do our duty at this crisis without waiting for outside agencies to give the lead. To prevent the impending sporadic outburst and guide the expected mass upheaval into fruitful channels of economic and social reconstruction is the task before the intelligentsia and the patriotic youth of this generation. This book is an appeal to the educated people to take an intelligent interest in politics and rescue our people from the mass hysteria to which they have fallen victims. It is also an appeal to the Youth of India to avoid the dangerous path which the Youth of Germany took of boycotting intellect and "thinking with its blood." Germany has been hurled from its place in the forefront of civilization as the most industrially and scientifically advanced nation upon the earth, down to the bottomless pit. She has been deprived of her gigantic workshops, of her glorious laboratories which were the inspiration, the pride and the hope of scientists all over the world. The vitals of her economic life have been cut and her people hurled back through the centuries to live primitive lives in villages as a backward nation. Germany has been humiliated in a manner which her worst enemies might have planned for but which they had dared not hope to achieve. Such punishment as Germany has taken was inflicted by the combined might of the world as just retribution for the sin she committed of "thinking with her blood." I ask the Youth of India to ponder over the fate which has overtaken Germany. In spite of her present misery, despite her hunger and her disease, Germany to-day is in a much better position from the economic and social point of view than India is or ever can hope to be if she continues to be subject to the present leadership. What the might of allied arms inflicted on Germany as punishment has been willingly undergone by India under cover of patriotism and religion. The creed of the Charkha and of village self-sufficiency is a sentence of death passed against India by the High Command of the Congress as fit



punishment for willing and unthinking subservience to its out-moded leadership.

Youth of India, please reflect: The world is yet in a tangle, a conflict of races and creeds. Humanity is yet a distant goal. The ugly scars of colour prejudice mar the beautiful face of mother earth. There is a sinister attempt to deprive vast sections of humanity of economic and social equality which they justly lay claim to. Exploitation is sought to be carried on not merely by the might of arms, by the power of aeroplanes and the threat of the atomic bomb, but by a more sinister and ingenious method of secreting knowledge and keeping science under the purdah. The less favoured nations are not to be let into the secret. The big powers gang up against the smaller ones and seek to prevent the knowledge of scientific discoveries reaching all sections of humanity. The Muses are no longer democratic. They are no longer accessible to all their votaries. They are imprisoned and kept in chains to serve the narrow purposes of the masters of the earth. The only hope for the backward peoples, the less favoured ones of the earth like India and the other coloured nations in China, Africa and elsewhere is for their Youth to gird up their loins and fight this monstrous attempt to imprison science. Knowledge has to be unchained and science liberated at any cost—yea, by hook or by crook. Discoveries of science have to be stolen so that they may be distributed to those who have been kept out of them. Comparatively backward nations like Japan in olden days and Russia to-day have instituted widespread systems of espionage to steal knowledge from the archives within the closed doors of science. That is the task which faces the Indian Youth if they would see their motherland enjoy equal rights with other nations. But lo and behold! Youth is driven *en masse* in the opposite direction, goaded by the spindle of the Charkha to the tune of *Ram Dhun*. Youth in its slumber treks along unwittingly, not realising the catastrophe ahead. Wake up, Youth. Turn right about.

15th Feb, 1947.

S. RAMANATHAN.

# LEAGUE OF YOUTH

## A POLITICAL STORM CENTRE

It was before the Mahatma captured the Congress, nearly thirty years ago. How time flies! Triplicane beach at Madras, the resort of the poor and the rich. There was no radio in those days and people could talk without being harrassed by the ubiquitous noise over the air. Along the beach road are parked motor cars out of which have emerged the privileged few, spick and span in mull dhoties, lace turbans and diamond ear rings. They jaunt along the avenue flourishing their silver - tipped canes. Away to the east, on the fringe of the sea, there are the have-nots, the semi-nude fishermen, busy hauling their frail barks ashore and handing over their bundles of fish, the fruits of the day's toil, to their waiting wives. In between the extremes, roam about the miscellaneous crowd of the middle class, tired clerks and famished students. They scatter among the sands into clusters. They boast of their day's accomplishments and plan for their future. A gentle breeze, the roaring waves, the blue sky and the golden rays of the setting sun are luxuries which Nature has bestowed upon them all, irrespective of their class or rank in society.

I was a student and lived in the Victoria Hostel. There was little opportunity for games and we spent the evenings mostly on the beach. I walked straight across the sands to my favourite spot where my mates had already gathered and were in the midst of a hot discussion. There were about a dozen of them, all of the same age, but not all of them of the same class or even of the same college. Some

were in the hostel but others were outsiders. But somehow this group had gathered together, I do not recollect how, and met day after day for years together at the same spot on the beach sands. They discussed all things under the sun, but seldom agreed on any matter. Each expressed a point of view different from every other. In the heat of the controversy they often came to blows, but blows were scarcely noticed by the giver or recipient in the heat of the controversy which flowed unceasingly. What drew me to this group I could not understand, but I felt an elemental pleasure in their company. I disagreed with the opinions of every one of them, but I shared their youthful enthusiasm, their innocence and their robust optimism.

#### HERO

The day's topic was unusually interesting. One of our group had suddenly burst into fame. His name was actually in the papers! He had interrupted one of Satyamurti's meetings on the previous day. The group was applauding the interrupter and making a hero out of him to his evident embarrassment. Most of the group supported the politics of the Liberal party, the Moderates. We were intensely Nationalistic but somehow we hated the Nationalist party, who, we thought, were insincere and were merely vociferous, while the Moderates, though far too meek, were, in our opinion, honest. Alone in the group I supported Satyamurti, whom I admired for two reasons. First: he was poor in those days, and, could not afford a motor car. He went about in a rickshaw, but still managed somehow to keep in politics. Second: he broke the tradition in Madras politics that only an Iyengar could belong to the Nationalist party, while every true born Iyer should join the Moderates. Look at all the shining stars of Moderatism, V. Krishnaswamy

#### LEAGUE OF YOUTH

Iyer, P. S. Sivaswamy Iyer, V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, T. R. Venkatarama Sastri, G. A. Natesan; and then have a look at the galaxy of Nationalist patriots, C. Vijayaraghava Achariar, S. Kasturiranga Iyengar, V. K. Ramanuja Achariar, C. Rajagopalachariar, A. Rangaswami Iyengar, C. R. Srinivasa Iyengar. S. Srinivasa Iyengar was then an official. But his place was ready waiting for him in the Nationalist party whenever he would take it. He could not go into the other camp. Born a blue blooded Sastri, Satyamurti had courage in breaking the tradition and joining the Nationalist party. My group of friends had a revolutionary outlook. They dismissed my argument as frivolous.

#### TEARS

My association with the group continued till the end of my college days and until I was sucked up by the Non-co-operation movement. It was an unbroken spell of pleasure except for one notable incident which lingers in my memory. We planned a trip to the Red Hills lake on a holiday. There was swimming and play until we got quite exhausted and hungry. We had arranged food at a Brahmin house. We trooped in with ravenous looks. Every one was admitted, but I was stopped at the gate. I was no Brahmin. I was told I should be served outside after the others had finished. I felt I was struck in my face. The shock overwhelmed me and I grew sick with anger. I did not mind the messkeeper. But, my friends! It dawned upon me for the first time that they were all Brahmins. They knew that I was kept out. They did not mind, because it was the custom. It was a matter of course. The lower castes must wait and take their turn after the higher castes are satisfied. That might be all right for others. But how could my friends, so

refined, so sensitive, how could they tolerate this monstrous practice? Should I rush in and create a scene? Should I thrash my pals for having connived at this insult offered to me? I turned away from that house, hid myself under a tree and wept. I was ashamed of my tears, but I could not help them, I was too near yet to childhood. But soon I hardened my heart, washed my face and went back to my friends who had by now finished their food and were searching for me to serve me. I pleaded a sudden attack of stomach pain and refused the food. All the way back from the Red Hills I kept silent and did not join the merry banter. It hurt me that none of my dear friends felt for me or fathomed the real reason why I refused the food.

#### GUERILLAS

Events like this do not occur nowadays in student life. Not in this particular form. Any such incident will now create a fracas. Time has mellowed caste. But it has not destroyed it. The prohibitions, the insults are still there, in subtler forms, but nevertheless insistent. The tuft and the caste mark are gone but the pride of superiority lurks under the scalp. It will not go unless caste is pulled out along with its root, the doctrine of Varnasharma, the notion that mankind should subsist on laws laid down by horse breeders. In later life, I had the good luck to move with the great, the most eminent Brahmins that the country had produced. They were brilliant, far more astute than my youthful companions, but on this question of caste they were no better. The tallest among them cannot forget that he is, after all, a member of the race of gods on earth. To their credit be it admitted that they make a supreme effort to suppress this sentiment. With ill success. It blurts out at an inopportune moment, in a virulent form. Witness.

the present C. R. controversy. By the way, I dislike the exotic name now given to him, "Rajaji", which is not Tamil and sounds funny to the southern ear. Poor C. R. must bear his cross. He pays the price for having driven the communal feeling underground. He has probably found out that it is easier to fight the panzer divisions than the guerillas.

### THE LEAGUE TAKES SHAPE

Two years have rolled by. My days at the college were nearing the end. But the friendships I contracted ripened into a formal Association. We called it the "League of Youth". The name was taken from a similar Association started in France by returned soldiers from World War number one, who wanted to create a new heaven and a new earth. We drafted a platform of action and put into it every good thing imaginable including complete Independence for India, adult suffrage, proportional representation with the transferable vote, eight hour day, single class in the Railways, socialist measures of all kinds, abolition of caste, and, most important of all, compulsory retirement of lawyers and others in the learned professions at the age of fifty five so as to give room for the juniors. We refused membership to any one above the age of thirty five. We pushed on with the scheme, in spite of frowns and discouragements from many quarters. An unexpected stroke of luck put fresh heart into us. We took our programme to the late Annie Besant. She amazed us by her magnificent kindness. She gave a gold sovereign as donation and promised one column of space in her paper, the "New India", every week and told us we could write anything we liked for uncensored publication in that column. The League of Youth was soon on the political map. We could not any longer be ignored. We

were a force to reckon with. We were a party with a programme and membership inferior to no other party in this part of the world. Besides, we had the gift of youth and dash. The older heads began to feel nervous.

#### MAHAJANA SABHA

We felt our power at the annual meeting of the Madras Mahajana Sabha. The Sabha was for long the stronghold of the Moderates. It had, and still has, valuable property on the Mount Road. What was more tempting, it had a handsome bank balance, now, alas, extinct. The Nationalists made repeated attempts to capture it, in vain. The League of Youth entered the Mahajana Sabha. We had no particular object in capturing it. We never dreamed it possible. At the annual meeting, the Moderates and the Nationalists once again tried their strength. Motor cars were busy throughout the day and there were last minute enlistments of members. We took no part in the scramble but were present as a distinct third group. The Moderates had assembled their majority but it was a too narrow majority. If we joined the Nationalists we could inflict at least a moral defeat upon the Moderates. We occupied a key position. A Parnellian position in fact. We cast our votes with the Moderates. The Nationalists twitted us by calling us the "budding Moderates". L. A. Govindaraghava Iyer was elected President and C. P. Ramaswami Iyer the Vice-President. The Moderate majority was an artificial affair, a few top men and all the rest, recruits from the ranks of a local Labour Union. It was, therefore, a task to fill in the Executive Committee. I was overwhelmed at the nominations: myself as the secretary, a member of the Youth League as the treasurer and several other Leaguers as committee members. Since the Moderates were busy men we had the free run of the

Mahajana Sabha for a whole year! But during the year the Gandhian maelstrom overtook us. In spite of other distractions, we improved the property and handed it over to a new Executive consisting entirely of Congressmen to the exclusion of the Moderates. Since then the Mahajana Sabha has remained an appendage of the Congress, financing its activities and suffering its mismanagements. The Diamond Jubilee of the Sabha has been celebrated with great eclat by its present office holders who know nothing about the tribulations that this citadel of the Moderates in Madras has undergone.

#### AMRITSAR

That year I attended the Amritsar Congress as a delegate, and brought back a clod of earth from the Jallianwallabagh. My mother was disappointed that I did not bring the Ganges water. I tried to convince her that that clod of earth from Jallianwallabagh was more sacred than the Ganges water. Amritsar was too cold for us. We had to sleep with live charcoal under the cots. The leader of the Madras camp was young Dr. Pattabhi who amazed us by talking exactly like a thesaurus he could never utter a word without following it up with all its near and distant equivalents in the English language. Tilak dominated that Congress. Jinnah was a good second. Mahatma Gandhi, who had already attained to Mahatmahood, was just emerging as a political force. He made a most powerful speech in the open session. In criticising the main resolution condemning the Montford reforms as "inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing", the Mahatma said that "if you consider that the reforms deserve those epithets you must boycott the reforms and not try to take a bite at them." That was the beginning of the Non-co-operation idea which swept the country nine months later.



During the following months the League was feverishly active. We undertook hundi collections for the Jallianwalla memorial. C. R. who had by then removed himself from Salem to Madras, was the chief organiser of the collections and he flattered us by saying there would have been no enthusiasm for the collections in Madras City but for the League of Youth.

#### TINNEVELLY

The Madras Provincial Political Conference under the old constitution of the Congress was held that year at Tinnevely. The Moderates attended the conference for the last time and received a severe thrashing from T. V. Gopalswami Mudaliar. S. Srinivasa Iyengar who had just resigned his Advocate-Generalship made a spectacular entry into politics by participating in that conference. Mahatma Gandhi had already started the Khilafat agitation and had promulgated the Non-cooperation movement and the triple boycott. Yakub Hasan sponsored the resolution adopting the Gandhian programme and C. R. supported it. The Moderates openly opposed the move. But the Nationalists led by S. Srinivasa Iyengar were in a fix. They had counted upon capturing the Legislatures, but the Mahatma wanted them to practice abstinence, which went very much against their grain. They tried a ruse and wanted the resolution to be postponed. The rank and file of the delegates were ready to pass the resolution by a majority. But seeing the universal opposition of the leaders on the dais, C. R. was willing to compromise. The League of Youth was there and urged upon C. R. not to yield to the pressure of the leaders and give up the rights of the delegates. C. R. became angry. He turned to me and cried, "Of course, we can pass any resolution we like with these delegates. But who is to put the resolution into

practice? Will one lawyer give up his profession? Will you give up yours?" It was a fateful moment for me. I was just entering the profession. I answered back, "I will, if the resolution is passed". C. R. was unprepared for the answer. He looked at me for a moment, then went up the platform and asked Yakub Hasan not to accept the compromise. The Non-co-operation resolution was passed amidst thunderous applause to the evident chagrin of the Nationalists. The Moderates disagreed with us but treated us with great respect. But the Nationalists looked daggers at us. S. Srinivasa Iyengar came out with his famous condemnation of the resolution as "unconstitutional" and Lord Willingdon, then Governor of Madras, made clever use of this legal opinion of the ex-Advocate General.

#### WORDS OF FIRE

A special session of the Congress was summoned at Calcutta to decide the issue of Non-co-operation. Tilak had died meanwhile and Lala Lajpat Rai was to preside. Mahatma Gandhi went on a whirlwind tour of the country accompanied by Moulana Shaukat Ali. The Shaukat-Gandhi pair was picturesque. It was said to be the combination of the biggest and the greatest man in India. The standing joke was that together they lived on the goat—the milk going to keep up the Mahatma and the flesh and bones going to nourish the Moulana. The League of Youth anxiously prepared for and awaited the arrival of the leaders at Madras. I attended every one of the meetings. The Khilafat issue did not appeal to me. But Non-Co-operation was said to be the means of attaining Swaraj, freedom for India. The call was irresistible. There was a mass meeting at the Triplicane beach. The platform was erected at the very spot where the League of Youth met every evening. The Mahatma uttered

those fiery words which shot into my heart and transformed my being. "I am not anti-British," he said, "I am anti-untruth, I am anti-humbbug." How far subsequent events fulfilled the expectations roused by those words, it is for history to determine. But at that moment, I had no doubts. Here was a leader for whom it was worthwhile to lay down one's life. My mind was made up. It was not mere patriotism. The urge was deeper. What is mere country; what is even humanity, when before you there is the vision of reality, the whole universe to be won? Will you not lay down your life a hundred thousand times for such a cause? I approached the other members of the League. All of them were more or less in my predicament. But some had heavy family responsibilities and could not make immediate decisions. The Mahatma gave a special talk to lawyers and law students at the Khilafat Committee office. We put our difficulty to him. All of us were not rich and some had big families to support. What was to happen to ourselves and to our dependents if we gave up our professions? "Look at me," came the reply, "I have no independent means of livelihood. I don't eat much, but I want two slices of bread for my meal. But twenty slices are kept ready at my meal time. I have to move about and require a motor car for the purpose. But every time I go out, twenty cars are kept ready for me, though I cannot get into even two cars at the same time. If you surrender yourself to the country, the country will surrender herself into your arms." The imagery behind the last sentence was enchanting. The country was not a mother to be worshipped, but a beloved to be embraced. We had no further doubts and six members of the League, all lawyers, went to his residence and handed over our names to the Mahatma, to be announced as lawyers who boycotted the courts in response to his call.

## FAMILY IN THE WAY.

Strange to say, the Mahatma did not look too pleased. Nor did he announce our names in the press. Instead, he recounted to us the story of a young man from Kumbakonam who during the previous Satyagraha movement gave his name as one of the participants and two weeks after the announcement was made, he withdrew because his family objected. It was the view of the Mahatma that Madrasis were more susceptible to family influences than people elsewhere. We had to admit that attachment to the family stood in the way of a proper response to the call of the country. I am still unable to assess the comparative depths of this weakness in the various provinces. Family attachment is a common human failing which has hindered the fight for freedom everywhere in the world. But, to-day, a quarter of a century after this warning by the Mahatma, this failing parades as a virtue. Indeed, it has become the fashion among Congressmen to think and speak of themselves as a family apart and distinguished from the rest, from non-Congress India. The danger now is that principles are smothered and truth is tarnished in the name of the family affection that is supposed to subsist among Congressmen, so that even the guilty should be pardoned because he is, after all, one of the family. This is a pernicious tendency. A Congressman who commits a mistake must be dealt with in the same manner as any one else. The spirit of exclusiveness which regards non-Congress India as being out of the family is a source of selfishness as well as of corruption. Why should we treat those who belong to other parties as untouchables? They see truth in their way and they serve their people according to their capacities. The family idea, when it pervades a party, makes of it a narrow clique. A democratic party should keep its doors wide open and its mind alert to imbibe the good things from all the parties. But I am digressing.

## INTELLECTUAL

The Mahatma did not reject our application. Far from it. He said he would keep it with him and watch our reaction for a fortnight. If, at the end of that period, we still persisted with our offer, he would announce our decision. Meanwhile, he started his tour of the southern districts, and he very kindly invited me to accompany him on the tour. That was the first time I travelled in the company of the great. Since then I have been in many of the tours with the Mahatma and have enjoyed opportunities of close personal study and exchange of views with him. The opinions I am setting down here are the fruits of a life time of such study and experience. It is true that he has now grown cold and replies in monosyllables to long letters from me. Allowance has to be made for the fact that he is now old and has reached final and unalterable decisions upon all vital subjects.

He does not tackle a contrary viewpoint, but avoids it. He loses his confidants long ago, who save him the bother of making decisions in difficult situations. The personnel of the Congress High Command has not altered these twenty-five years. He has introduced the deus-ex-machina, his inner voice, into politics as an act of supreme Revelation beyond the pale of human reason and criticism by mere mortals. But the Mahatma whom I fell in love with and pledged to follow to the end of my life, was a younger man, who had an alert mind and loved an argument with us though he twitted us, Madrasis, as hair-splitters. He did not confound his opponents by calling in the aid of God's Omnipotence. He did not conduct spectacular prayers. All his talks during that memorable tour in August, 1920, were intellectual treats. Particularly brilliant was his speech at Trichinopoly replying to the attack on him by "The Hindu."

## WORMS

When we passed through Malabar during that tour an incident happened which still haunts my memory and whose significance is not yet exhausted. At one of the small Railway Stations between Shoranur and Calicut, there was an unusually large crowd mostly, of course, of Muslim Moplahs who were aflame on the Khilafat issue. Gandhi and Shankat Ali spoke the customary words and the train was about to move on. Suddenly a student from a local school rushed towards the leaders' carriage and prostrated before the Mahatma. The Guard was hard put to it to save the student from being trampled upon by the surging crowd. He whistled and stopped the train. When the student rose from his prostrate state, the Mahatma called him to his side and reprimanded him for his rash act. The youth, nothing daunted, cried out "Oh! Mahatma, please bless me." The Mahatma, who was un-moved by the gushing fervour of the youth, asked him whether he was married. The youth replied that he was not. Then the Mahatma placed his hand over the head of the youth and blessed him in the following words: "May God grant you the wisdom never to marry." The youth raised his head in surprise on hearing these ominous words. The train moved on. I could not understand the meaning of the Mahatma's strange blessing. I asked him to explain. The Mahatma gave an explanation which to me at that moment was entirely convincing; but, when I thought about the incident in later years, doubts rose up in my mind whether the Mahatma was right after all. The Mahatma's explanation was this. There was the shooting at Jallianwallabagh which was rankling in peoples' minds in those days. Then there was the crawling order in the streets of Amritsar. People who passed the military sentinel had to

crawl on their bellies like worms in token of their submission to authority which they had disobeyed before the firing at Jallianwallabagh. The humiliation inflicted on the citizens of Amritsar was an affront to Indian manhood. People in distant corners of the country felt ashamed that instead of challenging the crawling order and being shot down there were individuals in Amritsar who obeyed that order thereby furnishing evidence to General Dyer and to Britishers of his way of thinking that Indians were in fact worms who could be trampled upon with impunity. The Mahatma told us in the train that the men who crawled in the streets of Amritsar had converted the Indian Nation into a bundle of worms—and worms were merely a burden to the world and deserved only to perish. Indians when they married and multiplied were only adding unnecessary burden to the world. Until India was free, until Indians refused to crawl, that is to say, until Swaraj was obtained Indians had no business and no right to marry and beget children. That was why, the Mahatma concluded, he advised the young man at the Railway Station not to marry. At that time, when our hearts were raging at the insult of Amritsar, this argument of the Mahatma appeared quite sound. Why should the already numerous population of India which was a disgrace to humanity owing to its tame subservience to British autocracy, further increase its numbers and thereby add to the disgrace of humanity. On the field of battle, one should steel one's heart and not allow it to soften by thoughts of love and marriage. There would be time enough for young India to love and to marry when the battle was over and youth carried home the banner of victory, of freedom. Many young men in the early years of non-co-operation thought in that strain and practiced abstinence in the hope that they would be summoned to the field of battle where they might

have to lay down their lives. Had the call come, had the Mahatma waged a real war for India's freedom after the manner of the wars in other lands, India's youth would have flocked under his banner and perished in the faith that out of the sea of their blood would rise a new generation of freemen born, rid of psychological complexes of which modern India is a prey. But the call never came. The Mahatma did not summon the youth to the field of battle; instead, India had to wallow in a series of unsuccessful experiments at the discovery of a new remedy for human ills. The Nationalist movement in India instead of pursuing the rational and beaten path of history and of science, broke into a short cut and under the inspiration of the Mahatma went after quack remedies and pseudo—science, a kind of alchemy to convert baser metal into pure gold. The search was in vain. The road was long and arduous. The heroic resolve of abstinence which would have endured the brief spell of a battle-field could not outlast the trials and tribulations of the long winded Gandhian programmes. One by one, the stalwarts fell from grace. They violated their vows of celibacy and abstinence. Youth relaxed and worms multiplied. The earlier resolve was heroic, it was natural, it could endure the moment of passion. It was a legitimate expression of anger in the face of an insult but it could not be made a permanent feature of life with its multifarious moments and facets. The Mahatma's admonition to the student was necessary and could have benefited him for a brief spell of years. But a permanent prohibition and full length life of celibacy was unnatural and was bound to produce psychological complexes and perversions of various kinds. But this attitude of scepticism overtook me after many years, after the spell cast by the Mahatma was broken.



## CONFIDENTIAL

At the end of the tour, the League of Youth reaffirmed its original decisions. We again met the Mahatma and insisted that no further time should be lost in announcing our boycott of the law courts and in enlisting our services in the National cause. The Mahatma agreed and did make the announcement. But he got worried about what work to assign to us. Just before leaving Madras he called me to his presence and talked to me in a hushed voice which made me feel I was being favoured with a confidential message. He asked me whether I had any knowledge of Hindi and whether I had seen hand spinning of cotton yarn on the Charkha. To both the questions I returned a negative answer. Then he told me that I should set about learning Hindi and hand spinning because these two were the foundations of the Swaraj he was building up. He enjoined upon me to convey this message to my friends and then left Madras for the North. We all felt dazed at this parting injunction of our leader. What on earth could Hindi and spinning have to do with Freedom's battle for which we had enlisted? Having soared to sublime heights, we seemed to have landed on the ridiculous. However, we did not lose heart. Probably, the Mahatma was only testing our patience. We girded up our loins and set to work. We had burnt our boats. We faced the new land, come what might.

## END OF THE LEAGUE

That was the end of the League of Youth. Thereafter the members got scattered to various parts of India and were assigned various responsibilities. With pride, I recollect that none of us have regretted our fateful step. With one exception, none went back to the Bar. The Bar was already

crowded enough. Probably, it did not lose by our abstinence. Or, perhaps, an insipient Bashyam Iyengar or Mani Iyer was in our group and failed to flower because of our rash act of self-immolation. We were noted for our modesty. We toiled hard at our various tasks. Speaking of us individually, we have not lost in terms of personal happiness. We have lived fuller and broader lives. Though we might not be prosperous, we have experienced the ups and downs of human existence which are not within the reach of the dull routine at the Bar. We were unknown to fame. Our sacrifices were not spectacular. We did not evoke popular enthusiasm as Das and Nehru did. But, kind reader, reflect for a moment. The great give out of their plenty. The humble give out of their poverty. None can give more than he has. We gave our all.

#### YOUTH ETERNAL

The League of Youth was not formally dissolved, but it could not function in the storm and stress of the high seas of active politics. It was a frail boat built to negotiate the still waters of student fancy. It became functionless when the mariners, whom it trained, enlisted in the fighting Navy. The members of the League have separated and each is battling in his own sphere. They have developed divergent and even conflicting personalities. They seldom meet; and when they do, now, as ever, they are unable to agree with each other on any matter. They have aged and cannot come to blows, but they talk as though they do. I was their secretary, but I have now no representative character. Every word in this booklet will be repudiated by every one of them. But I talk for them, in spite of them, and against their words. Indeed, I arrogate to myself a still higher function. I speak on behalf of that generation of Youth who

wasted themselves in the service of the Mahatma. I voice the interests of all the generations of Youth who crave to sacrifice themselves before an idol. But I warn the reader, I have no commission from anybody. The responsibility for these words is entirely mine.

#### CONCLUSION

I have been driven to the conclusion that the entire Gandhian idea is a fallacy. I say this with the greatest respect for a personality of great eminence. But personality is different from principle. In our country this distinction is difficult to realise. This little book will not be understood, indeed it will be misunderstood, by people who have not learnt this elementary distinction. The personality of the Mahatma is colossal. I have loved him. He had power of life and death over me for long years. But I have not worshipped him. I never stooped to touch his feet or prostrate my body before him—that is a disgusting habit which he should never have permitted. He would have been human and would have affected the masses more directly, had he repudiated the title of "Mahatma" which Annie Besant unwittingly bestowed on him. When man becomes Mahatma, he becomes superhuman, supernormal. To the popular mind in India, the Mahatma is above the laws of Nature. What the Mahatma says or does, only the Mahatma can say or do. Mere man cannot, dare not, venture to say or do the same. To people in the villages, the Mahatma appears in dreams and guides them in their private affairs. Mahatma is above mere mortals. He is not to be followed. He is to be worshipped from a distance. Say "Jai" to him and go your way. You fail to bow to him at your peril. I do not write this in anger but in sorrow. Who am I, to measure my strength against a world celebrity? I revere the Mahatma, but he has destroyed not merely the right of self—

expression of Indians, but their very right to think. The British may quit to-morrow. But India will remain a vast prison house with "Jais" resounding on all sides, without a ray of intelligence.

### RETURN TO THE JUNGLES

I said that the Gandhian idea is a fallacy. I must qualify that statement. Gandhism is not an idea. It is not a system of philosophy. It has no logic. The Mahatma has an eclectic mind. He gathers experiences on the way side and transforms them into weapons in his armoury. Nor has he worked out a code of empiricism. He throws out his programmes pell-mell. He is not modern. He draws his wisdom from the dry bones of ancient scriptures. He believes that the Gita, which is part of the legend of the Mahabharata is the word of God and that it is not given to mere man to question that Divine Ordinance. He turns away from Science and machinery as from the devil and casts a longing eye upon an imaginary golden past when man lived in tune with Nature, unspoilt by cities, factories, roads and railways. His teaching is, therefore, a call to mankind to turn back on civilisation and return to the jungle. This is the core of the doctrine round and about which are thrown on and off various programmes to suit the moods of the moment. The Mahatma himself does not pretend that he is in accord with modern thought. The latest authors he reaches up to are Ruskin and Tolstoy. But followers are not wanting who lisp modern phraseology to defend the ancient anachronism. Professors of Economics, Principals and Acharyas dive deep into the latest discoveries of Science and Technology to bolster up palpable absurdities. The critical mind is able to see through this maze of verbiage, but the ignorant masses are easily misled by propaganda based on pseudo-Science.

## II

### A TRIP TO THE SUN

The Gandhian programme has two aspects, a negative and a positive, the former a series of boycotts and the latter a series of constructions. Let me summarise the achievements in both the aspects as I see them. The first great achievement was the boycott of the Legislatures in 1920, with the result that the Legislatures were filled by non-Congressmen. Das led the revolt against this futility. He knew the value to a disarmed people of the sanction behind the popular vote. He formed a new group and compelled the withdrawal of the boycott. The Das policy is now being implicitly followed and the present dominating strength of the Congress is entirely due to that policy. But it is forgotten that it is the very opposite of the Gandhian method, unless, of course, Gandhism has no method but is sheer opportunism. Even the Mahatma is now saying that the Legislatures have to be captured by Congressmen with a view to preventing reactionaries getting into them. He forgets that this argument had application in 1920 also. He forgets also that this argument is available to the Justice party in Madras, for instance. Why should they not say, as they did in 1920, that they got into the Legislatures to prevent reactionaries getting in? Patriotism is common ground for all parties. Every party is entitled to consider every other party as reactionary. As for preventing corrupt persons from getting in, individuals can be corrupt in all parties. No political party, as such, can be corrupt. Are all Congressmen saints? The boycott of the Legislatures, therefore, as a method of Gandhism, was a failure and has been withdrawn with the consent of the Mahatma.

## HIMALAYAN BLUNDERS

The other two items of the triple boycott shared the same fate. The boycott of Schools and Colleges was openly acknowledged a Himalayan blunder. Nobody now remembers the courts-boycott and leading Congressmen including sometimes members of the Working Committee do practice at the Bar with great profit to themselves and, let us hope, to the country also.

## A SOLAR SYSTEM

Let us consider the other side of the medal, the so called constructive programme, the positive implication of the negative boycotts. As I said above, this programme is a veritable turn-back on civilisation. It is characteristic of the eclecticism of the Mahatma that he started with two, Charkha and Hindi, and went on adding one item after another until the number has now reached eighteen. It may, in due time, swell up to eighty or a hundred. In the Mahatma's picturesque language, the Charkha is the centre, the Sun, around which revolve the other items, as planets of varying importance.

## THE SUN

The secret of this whole planetary system can be grasped by a study of the nature and function of its centre, the Sun, i.e. the Charkha. It has been my special good fortune to have had ample opportunity for a close study of the Charkha. I can write a whole volume on this subject but I shall recount here the main features only. I took the Mahatma's injunction to me in 1920 quite literally and wandered through the villages of South Arcot district, in Sun and rain, carrying the Charkha on my head in an attempt to

revive it. My enthusiasm earned recognition from the elders and the Provincial Congress Committee put me in charge of the entire direction of Charkha activity in the fourteen Tamil districts. Later I served as the secretary of the Tamil Nad Khadi Board. When after being worsted in the battle against C. R. Das, the Mahatma retired from politics and founded the All India Spinners' Association to work exclusively the Charkha programme, I became the first secretary of the Tamil Nad branch of the A. I. S. A. I was the young man in a hurry. I exerted all my energy for a period of three years to develop the programme. I tried all my skill to put this ancient economy on a modern footing. There was some quantitative progress visible, but in terms of quality, of vitality, it proved a failure. Being close to this work, immersed in its every day details, and feeling the pulse of my co-workers from day to day, the conviction gradually overtook me that the revival of this anachronism was a hopeless affair. The Charkha was a dead body. The life went out of it centuries ago. My attempt to make it live again was like making love to a mummy. I felt disgusted. I took my difficulty to the Mahatma. He did not understand me. He could not or would not face the facts. His mind had by then become rigid. He needed the Charkha at any cost. For him the Charkha was an indispensable symbol, a peg to hang his words on. I was unequal to that life of symbolism and I resigned the service of the Charkha. I relieved the anguish of my heart in a series of articles to the press condemning the economics of khadi. I knew that the Charkha was the essence of Gandhism. When I denounced the Charkha I was up against every tenet of Gandhism. Above all I had to struggle against the veil of religious mysticism that the Mahatma threw around the ordinary facts of economics and politics.

I had studied philosophy in my University and knew only too well the dangers of inner voices which turn away from intelligence and incline towards blind instinct. The forcible feeding of religion that I endured under the spell of the Mahatma, made me a militant atheist. I helped to found the Self-respect Movement which, under the peculiar conditions prevailing in our country, later on produced its opposite, the black shirts. Then I undertook foreign travel and visited Soviet Russia. But this is not a book of memoirs and I shall not tire the reader with all the adventures of my life. Let us go back to the Charkha.

#### VOLTE FACE

Strange to say, ten years after my disowning of the creed of the Charkha, I found myself speaking from the Government benches in the Madras Legislature, supporting a Budget Grant of two lakhs of rupees per year to spread the Charkha. The Opposition twitted me with quotations from my earlier speeches and writings against hand spinning. Was it sheer opportunism on my part? The impatient reader may dismiss me as guilty. I warn him that life is a complicated affair and patience is required to get at its essence. I shall explain how my mind worked. Let me give a parallel.

#### A RUSSIAN STORY

In my wanderings through Soviet Russia, I came across a popular novel called "Cement". There was a character in that story who was an Engineer guarding the machinery of a cement factory right through the bloody revolution. He was brought up in the capitalist tradition and he feared and deplored the revolution which manifested itself in the murder of technicians and the burning of factories. He was in constant danger of getting killed as a supporter of the old order.



But at the end of it all, when the revolution had triumphed and when the revolutionaries turned their hands to reconstruction, they were badly in need of Engineers to repair and restart the factories that survived the fires and the pillages. They called upon this capitalist Engineer to serve the revolution. The call created an emotional crisis in the Engineer. The old order which brought him up and to which he was still attached had gone for ever. The people around him, the men and women he was born with, his countrymen, his country, had got attached to a new order which he disliked. But, what his country wanted, what his country liked, was it not good enough for him? Should he refuse to serve his people, because they were misguided? What was his life worth if it was not lived in harmony with his fellows? The Engineer in the story, though he was not convinced that the revolution was right, nevertheless elected to serve his revolutionary countrymen. That was the state of mind in which I took the Congress ticket in the 1937 elections and accepted membership in the Congress Ministry.

#### HOPE IN NEHRU

There was a second reason. Jawaharlal Nehru, the inspirer of Young India, was a product of modern culture. He did not get up in the morning to chant the Gita. He was an Internationalist and a Socialist. The leadership of the country was bound to pass to him. Under his guidance the Congress might give up the Charkha mentality and march forward in tune with the time spirit. The reader may or may not accept the reasons I have given for my change of front. But there it was. I did subordinate my deepest convictions to what I considered overwhelming practical considerations. I put on khadi and spoke in support of it.

## WARTIME NEED

But a further trial awaited me in a couple of years. The World War number two broke out. India was declared a belligerent country without our consent. The Provincial Governments had to resign to protest against this affront. I had no regrets in getting rid of an office which carried no responsibility. But an unexpected call came to me from above, to take charge of the Charkha work in the Tamil Districts, the job which I gave up so long ago. The prospect appalled me, but I could not disobey. I parried and took time. I went away on a tour to Japan hoping that the call might lapse by the time I returned. But the call did not lapse. So I took back the work which I had once condemned in unqualified terms. It was not merely the sense of party discipline that led me to this step. The conviction was still in my bones that Charkha was hopelessly out of date. So was the rickshaw and the catamaran. On my way to Japan I had seen the sampans and the rickshaws in lakhs serving their ancient purpose. Certain countries were so unfortunately placed that they could not afford modern machinery. Their populations were poor, and, as the saying went, rice power was cheaper than petrol. Moreover we were then in the midst of a cataclysm. My visit to Japan convinced me that soon the Japanese army would be at our frontiers, and, in any case, we should be cut off from the rest of the world. Temporarily though it might be, the bullock cart, the country boat and the Charkha would be requisitioned into service and would have an important role to play. Now was the time, against the background of the war, when the Charkha could come back to life and could have a logical though temporary place in the scheme of things in India. The war time Administrations were already calling upon the people to

avoid the railways and take to country crafts. Why not I walk in the same direction and call for a boycott of the mills and a revival of the Charkha?

#### PAL'S IDEA

One other argument pressed upon my mind and induced me to go back to the Charkha. In my boyhood days I had read the orations of Bepin Chandra Pal on the Madras beach. Commenting upon the numerical superiority of the people of India over their foreign rulers, he had said that if all India would unite and spit upon the rulers, the latter would get drowned in the spittle. Apart from the crudeness of the metaphor employed, the argument was correct. The population of India was so imponderably huge that anything that they set their hands to with a united will was bound to succeed. Probably even the Charkha might do the trick and might serve the purpose that Bepin Pal had in view. I was aware that even a spitting programme had its inevitable and rigorous conditions. Indiscriminate spitting was already extant in our country and achieved the opposite of Pal's purpose. Pal's idea was to make all India face up to the problem and act as one man with honesty and determination. The Mahatma might be old fashioned. But, certainly, he was honest and determined. So, I plunged back into khadi service.

#### BHARATANANDA

Charkha work was familiar ground for me. I knew every alley, every shoal, and every pit in the path. For a period of two years I went forward with feverish heat. The war furnished the grand opportunity by pushing up the price of mill made cloth above the level of khadi prices. There was no need to requisition the patriotism of the buyer

to effect khadi sales. The problem was one of production. In this country of eternal want and starvation there is no dearth of labour. Spinners are always available in plenty. The question resolved itself into providing the worker with the means of production, the Charkha and the cotton. Charkhas were needed not in thousands but in lakhs. The village carpenters were limited in number and utterly inadequate to meet the need of mass supply. So I was inevitably led to think of a factory equipped with power-driven machine tools for manufacturing Charkhas on a large scale. I was fortunate in securing the co-operation of the Polish Engineer, Maurice Frydman, in designing the factory. Frydman who delights in his Hindu name, Bharatananda, is a poet and a philosopher, besides being an eminent inventor. Under his direction I built the factory at Gandhinagar, near Tirupur, where it still stands as a monument to that final attempt to modernise the Charkha. The factory bears the name of Shankarlal Banker, a former secretary of the A. I. S. A. who burnt out his youth in the service of the Charkha.

#### SHANKARLAL WORKS

Two miles south of Tirupur town, on the road leading to the shrine of Avinashi, are a few rows of tiny cottages inside a garden. They do not suggest a factory at all. There are no ugly structures, no chimneys, no slums. Neither is there the squalor, the dirt and the stink associated with the village. The curious traveller may apply at the gate for permission to peep in. If he is lucky and is allowed inside, he will see how a village can be transformed by the intelligent employment of science. There are all the amenities of the city made available to the villager. Water supply, flush bathrooms, electricity, radio, telephone and easy accessibility to the railways and motor bus routes. There

are quarters for the workers, a school, a playground, a communal kitchen, cows, draught bulls, carts. The garden grows vegetables and flowers. There is bee keeping, spinning, carding and the allied industries. The credit for building up this *El Dorado* is not mine. It belongs to the brilliant and devoted band of khadi workers in Tamil Nad. They dreamed dreams and toiled for years to make their dreams come true. Alas, in vain. The Dye-House was built by my predecessor, Ayamuthu. I added the workshop. Most of the processes in the workshop are hand made. Of course, there are a few processes employing electric power. But there are no shaftings and beltings which confuse and oppress the visitor to any factory. Every cottage has installed inside it a small motor giving all the power needed for the process for which that cottage is intended. A cupola melts pig iron for the Charkha bearings. There are a few lathes, drilling machines, saws and planing machines to work on iron and wood. Many of the machines are miniature models run with fractional horse power motors. There is no noise or bustle. Every cottage is a self-contained unit. The total number of workers including those employed in the Dye-House and the workshop is about 150, spread all over the garden measuring six acres. Most of the villages in that district are more densely populated. This factory which could easily have grown into a moderate sized village could have supplied implements for village industries in the whole Province.

#### GOVERNMENT HELP

Let me acknowledge the help that the Advisers' Government gave me by not only continuing the Grant that the Congress Government had already provided for in the Budget, but also by giving an additional Capital Grant that covered much of the cost of erection of the sheds and the equipment of the machinery. Other Provincial Governments might have

interfered with the constructive activities of the Congress; but the Government in Madras, throughout that trying period, not only did not place any impediments in our work, but were helpful to the extent they could with their limited means and within their limited knowledge.

#### SECRET REPORT

Having secured the supply of Charkhas for the mass production of handspun cloth that I had in view, I next turned to the purchase and stocking of cotton and the distribution of the same to the spinners. This was largely a question of funds. The money available with me, though sufficient for normal work, was entirely inadequate to meet the exigencies of the new situation created by the war. So I applied to Headquarters either to send me fresh funds or to allow me to borrow from our Bankers who were willing to give a loan of four lakhs of rupees. When the Headquarters failed to respond I appealed straight to the Mahatma who was the President of the Charkha organisation. The reply gave me a shock. Not only was no money promised, but, I learnt, the Mahatma's mind was prejudiced against me by a secret report that the All India Secretary got up condemning the work in this Province. When finally I got a copy of that report I found it a tissue of deliberate and malicious falsehoods.

#### UNDERMEN

Two facts emerged out of this incident. First, the people above me who had access to the Mahatma's ears did not like my drive to universalise the Charkha by taking advantage of the war situation. The reason behind the dislike was alleged to be my having used power driven machinery in some of the processes. But when I investigated this reason it proved to have no substance. Some of the machines

I used were already utilised for some purpose or other in other Provinces and even at the Headquarters. The only sensible method of manufacturing cast iron bearings which are indispensable for the Charkhas is by the method of the power driven Cupola. I travelled to Ahmedabad and found out that there not only the Cupola but even the lathes that turned out the bearings were power driven. Only they employed contractors as intermediaries to do the dirty job of employing power driven machinery. My sin was that I did not camouflage the affair by using intermediaries and did it all directly and openly. The second fact that emerged was that those in authority above me did not want this Province to go ahead of other Provinces in the manner that I had envisaged. We wanted more money to go ahead. I did not ask them for money. I had arranged for a loan. I asked them permission to take it which they readily gave on other occasions. They now ferreted out principles to refuse the permission. All that talk of theoretical objection to borrowing from Banks was an eye wash. Loans have been taken on other less important occasions. The real reason for the refusal was different. Already Tamilnad was head and shoulders above every other Province in regard to khadi work. If my scheme was allowed to fructify we should monopolise the whole field. The Southerner was an inferior person and he should be put in his proper place which was not the vanguard. So prejudices were dressed up with falsehoods and served in secret to the Mahatma. Not being in the privileged circle my protests and warnings went unheeded.

#### "FAMILY" TO THE RESCUE

I sent a detailed reply to that secret report and exposed the many deliberate misstatements. The Mahatma had not the patience to go into the merits of that reply or to weigh the facts and pronounce his verdict. Instead, he took the

easy line and said "Are we not all members of a family? Let us forget and forgive." The wound was too deep to be forgotten. Of course, everything could be forgiven if there was at least a belated expression of regret for the false accusations. I seemed to be a misfit in that family. Besides, the matter concerned not only me, but my co-workers, my Province, Tamil Nad; and in a sense, it related to the fundamentals of public service in this country. That an inspired report got up without any open enquiry and without giving the accused an opportunity to state his case should gain credence of the highest authority was suggestive of Nazi Germany and not of the struggling democracy of India, engaged in the battle for freedom. Moreover, if there was to be no drive for mass production of khadi, as I conceived it, what was my function in the organisation? Of course, I could drift, keeping the *status quo*, appealing to the patriotism of the people to buy up the little khadi which we always produced. I could keep myself going by pleasing the favourites of the Inner Circle. The prospect was not to my taste, and I offered to go.

#### AUGUST MOVE

But soon I lost the power to go. When my resignation was under consideration by the Head Office, events happened. The A. I. C. C. passed the famous August resolution at Bombay. The country was heading to a crisis. I could not abandon my post unless they did not want me. The A.I.S.A. was non-political, but we had our part to play at such critical times. We had to serve our people in their distress. I did not press my resignation and prepared to meet the emergency in my Province. News came to me that certain Provincial Governments had passed orders to suppress the Charkah organisations under their jurisdiction on the plea that they



were doing the political work of the Congress. But the constitution of the A. I. S. A. was there to guide us all. So long as it was possible for us to carry on Charkha work we should continue our strictly non-political activities. But if we were prevented from doing our work, we should cease to belong to the A. I. S. A. but take up the challenge, in our individual capacities. The Government of Madras did not take any step against us. Whatever might happen elsewhere, and it was not easy to ascertain the facts in those disturbed days, our duty as khadi workers was clear and well defined in this Province.

#### GREATER AUGUST

Then a surprise awaited me. That same Agent of the Head Office who was made to write that secret report against me was sent to me with a secret message. That message was that the A. I. S. A. had ceased to be non-political and we were to take part in the political movement. As evidence of his authority he delivered to me a letter marked "confidential" from a member of the Central Executive asking me to start a no-tax campaign by withholding payment of the next instalment due under the War Risk Insurance Ordinance. It was great news. The entire basis of the Constructive Programme was being changed. The constitution of the A. I. S. A. contemplated an organisation "unaffected and uncontrolled by politics, political changes or political bodies."

#### BREACH OF FAITH

Could we go against the constitution? In any case, would it be right for us to do so? The Mahatma had said times without number, that under no circumstances should

the A. I. S. A. play a political role. He had collected funds from those opposed to the Congress giving his solemn assurance that khadi work was not party work but was entirely humanitarian. The Congress Governments had given grants for khadi development out of Public Revenues. The biggest grant was by the Madras Government, of a sum of two lakhs recurring every year. When the grant was moved in the Legislature, the Opposition expressed the fear that the funds might be used for party purposes. The Ministry pledged its word against such misuse. The Advisers' Government that succeeded the Congress Ministry put khadi workers on their honour by not only continuing the grant but also by giving additional capital grants for building up and equipping workshops for manufacturing Charkhas. I had no doubt in my mind that the step contemplated by the Head Office would amount to a breach of faith by us. It was a difficult choice for me. Should I obey the Head Office or should I disobey? I was all for discipline. I was very much inclined to obey. Of course, it would be a breach of faith with the Government, with other political parties who voted funds for us, and with the people who believed in the words of khadi workers. But when the cause related to National freedom, why not commit the breach of faith, if, by doing so, we could further the cause of freedom? The standards of morality applicable to individual lives may not apply on the higher plane of politics where lives of millions are involved. Statesmen all the world over and at all times in history have committed perjury and practiced double-dealing in the interests of the nations they served. Such acts though not moral are called statesmanship and are not merely condoned but extolled by the people. Does not the British mis-rule in India justify such desperate remedies to end it?

## BOURGEOIS VIRTUE

Let me again go back to the Russian story I have already alluded to, "Cement". The heroine in that story loves her husband passionately. But he leaves her to serve the Revolution. The separation is unbearable. The disconsolate wife decides to express the great love she bears to her husband by rendering support to the revolutionaries in her village at great risk to her life. Gradually she dedicates herself to the cause so dear to the heart of her lover. She gets involved in the acts of the revolutionaries, and step by step, she is drawn into the most dangerous situations. At one stage, she is called upon to make the supreme sacrifice, that of her chastity, to further the cause. She makes the sacrifice, creating thereby a problem for her husband. Communist ideology, as expounded by the author, demands such sacrifice from the heroine. No sacrifice, be it of truth or of honour, is too dear if it would serve the cause of the Revolution. Any hesitation in that regard would be denounced as "Bourgeois virtue," which in Communist parlance means a fraud. Patriotism in most countries is at that same level and would applaud similar sacrifices on the part of its votaries. If I were younger by twentyfive years and could resume my life before I met the Mahatma, I would have accepted that code of conduct. The passionate fervour of the League of Youth would have taken that line. But now, No. The Mahatma's advent had changed it all. A pre-eminence had been assigned to truth which could not be set aside for patriotism or even a higher objective. My study of the Mahatma and his words for a quarter of a century would have been falsified if I listened to the siren voice of the Head Office. After all I was senior in khadi service as well as in the discipleship to those dictating to me from above. Why

should I give up the Ideal for a paltry and temporary advantage? So, I decided to disobey the mandate from the Centre and paid the premium due under the War Risk Insurance Ordinance.

### REVOLT

As I said before, such a revolt against the Head Office went very much against my grain and I felt thoroughly unhappy at having to undertake it, although it was nothing unusual in the A. I. S. A. where Provinces often took independent lines and did not conform to the directives of the Head Office. I, therefore, fortified my position by referring the matter to C. R. I do not wish to create fresh difficulties for him. But this account will be incomplete if I do not disclose that I had the hearty approval of C. R. in everything I did in this connection. C. R. was positive that the A.I.S.A. should be kept non-political any cost. The risk was still there that the Mahatma in prison might disown my and C. R.'s interpretation of his mind and condemn the revolt. I took, that risk.

What was the alternative course open to me? Of course I could have toed the line for the Head Office and refused to pay the tax. If I had consulted merely my personal convenience, that would have been the easier course. Let me quote the relevant section of the Ordinance which provided for such a contingency:

"ORDINANCE IX, 1940.

7. (2) Whoever contravenes the provisions of sub section (1) shall be punishable with fine which may extend to Rs. 1000 and with a further fine which may extend to Rs. 500 for every day after the first on which the contravention continues."

So there would not be even a jail sentence awaiting me. There would be a fine imposed of a huge recurring sum which would be collected not from me but from the A. I. S. A. out of the funds deposited with it by the poor spinners and weavers. Probably khadi work would be banned and the Police would lock up our village centres which gave some measure of relief to the poor in war time. The punishment would thus descend upon the poorest in the country who would never know why they were thus being punished. It would have been strange justice.

#### OTHER PEOPLE'S COCOANUTS

It was not at all clear to me how the mind of the framers of this scheme of Civil Disobedience worked. Did they intend this step as the beginning of a series of other steps involving non-payment of all other taxes to the Government and the ushering in of the full blast of Civil Disobedience in all its multifarious forms? I enquired of the acting President and other members of the Executive to clarify the position. None of them could do so. None could tell me why this particular tax was selected in preference to all other taxes for Disobedience. The strangest part of the whole affair was that this Disobedience not only started but ended with the A. I. S. A. No other organisation or individual was called upon to participate in the campaign. Indeed, it was no campaign at all. It was a single isolated act of vicarious immolation unconnected with any happening elsewhere. Some of those in Bombay who were very angry with me for not having involved the A.I.S.A. in the manner contemplated, were businessmen who were very regular in the payment of this and all other taxes. When I asked them why not single merchant of Bombay had taken to this method of Civil Disobedience, I was told that whether private individuals did

or did not respond to the National call it was the duty of a patriotic organisation like the A. I. S. A. to do so without counting the cost. It was a strange kind of patriotism which enforced the sacrifice of the savings of the poor spinners and left the money-bags free to gather in the war-profits. There is a Tamil saying that the prudent man breaks other people's cocoanuts before the god *Ganesa*. My A. I. S. A. superiors were all prudent men.

#### TELEPATHY

Those were days when the people above would not deign to argue with me. They assumed mysterious airs and talked in whispers about messages they got straight from the Mahatma in prison. I was told everything was done with the knowledge and approval of the Mahatma. I was informed with a great deal of emphasis that my disobedience of the Head Office in this matter was within the knowledge of the Mahatma and I was led to infer that the Mahatma had already disapproved of my conduct. This threatening language only confirmed my previous attitude. Once again the conviction was borne in upon me that I was a misfit in this happy family. I told them finally that so long as I was allowed to function I should prevent this mockery of Civil Disobedience, but that I would go gladly if they sent a substitute in my place. They sent the substitute and I went.

#### I YIELD PLACE TO YOUTH

It was for me a cruel wrench from my young colleagues in rural service. I could not repress my tears at taking leave of the tiny workshop at Gandhinagar, which I loved so dearly. I had hoped it would pave the way for a vast industrial upheaval in the Tamil villages: it would now survive, if it did survive at all, as an obituary notice to my

misguided efforts." I felt humiliated, because it was not the first time I was quitting khadi work. Why did I come back at all? My mind recollected the fate of the Engineer in the Russian story "Cement" to which I have alluded. *He* was accepted by *his* people. Why were *my* people sending *me* away? Was it because they did not want an Engineer, but a mere tool? I repressed the thought. Perhaps, I had to go because I proved a bad Engineer. My successor and my young colleagues, who were still enthusiastic and hopeful, might have better skill than I had, and they might succeed where I failed. I had aged. The young workers I left behind were better representatives of the spirit of Youth which was the essence of all life. I consoled myself with the hope that Youth would always succeed.

#### YOUTH DISPLACED

For a time it looked as though my hopes would be fulfilled. My departure seemed to have a sobering effect on the high gods. They did not dismantle the workshop as I feared they would. They not only allowed it to function, but even permitted the going forward with my plans for further expansion. I received the glad tidings that the Bleach Liquor plant was completed, the plumbing for the flush-latrines would be finished and the hand made paper plant would soon be in commission. I was pleased with the prospect that after all Gandhinagar would prosper. But my pleasure was short lived. News came in suddenly one day that the new management was making a bold bid for power. It had attempted to throttle the workshop by selling away the motors and the raw materials collected with so much trouble. The reason alleged for their sale was that they appreciated in value and would fetch good profits. The sale was stopped only by a threat of resignation from the staff.

Then gradually pressure was applied in other directions and one by one the top ranking members of the service resigned. The management did not summon the courage to scrap the workshop but allowed it to continue a lifeless existence. The Head Office had established its rule in Tamil Nad. Youth was displaced.

#### YOUTH SPEAKS

The situation that resulted is described in a moving letter written to me on the eve of his resignation by a young khadi worker, one of the flowers of the present generation of Youth of our country. Let me take the privilege of quoting from that letter :

"Even these twisted interpretations of the decision of the Board of Trustees did not stagger me so much as the attitude which executives in branches were advised to adopt when revenue authorities demanded payment of kist, or Insurance authorities demanded payment of premium. The bosses of the A. I. S. A. advised that we should tell the local village munsif to get into direct touch with the bosses; why, not even the bosses, with Sri. Jaju (All India Secretary) himself in jail who is the owner of the lands as per records, and collect the kist from him. I was disgusted with this insincere and ridiculous mandate. One of the peculiar justifications put forward at the time in favour of this procedure was that the Head Office in Bombay was very keen that Branch executives should be "spared" the "odium" of all these activities and that the "whole wrath" of the government should be faced by the Head Office. I knew even then, and did not hesitate to say it aloud, that this



was a perversion of the very spirit of the A. I. S. A. I felt that those in power were committing a breach of trust. This feeling I have had for the past six months. The happiness prevailing in Gandhi Nagar created its own reaction in the form of a concentrated jealousy. This reaction began to work to undermine everything we aspired to do. First began the process of liquidation, which had, as its excuse, the slender finances of the Association. Efforts were made to dispose of all sorts of useful material in the black market, on the ground that "Capital" was "locked up" in Gandhi Nagar. "Surplus" dyestuffs were sold away, "surplus" copper was sold away, and ever so many other materials it was decided to get rid of on the ground that unnecessary and too heavy "capital" locked up in Gandhi Nagar was being released usefully to enable khadi production to increase as never before. With great strain on my patience and temper, I prevented the sale of most useful things such as motors etc. inspite of the heaviest pressure brought to bear. Later, when the craze for sale had subsided somewhat, the reaction tried to break up and divide Gandhi Nagar into sectional interests so that not much difficulty would be experienced in ruling unruly people like myself. It was no use continuing a state of affairs which was born of ill-will on one side and of disgust on the other. All my previous compromises about principles could no more be valid.

"All these moral and administrative difficulties and a thousand other pin pricks decided my final course of action and I am sure you would greet me with your warm approval. My going away is no

source of pleasure to me. I had great hopes of submerging myself in this small world I had chosen for myself. My hopes here stand shattered. But it had to be so and to that extent I welcome it. You brought me into Gandhi Nagar and on so many occasions, in letters and in person, you had expressed your ambitions about Gandhi Nagar and I had expected to follow you and make of Gandhi Nagar a nice active little world. My stay in Gandhi Nagar was the happiest period of my short life so far. I felt the joy of work here as I never felt anywhere else, perhaps joys never last too long."

#### NOT MERCENARIES

This young man who went away from Charkha service with such a heavy heart is now earning six times the salary the A. I. S. A. paid him. Similar is the experience of other workers who had to leave with him. All of them now earn money beyond the reach of khadi workers and personally are more comfortable. But the spirit went out of their lives when they were driven out of the work which was after their heart, which kept them poor but made them happy in the feeling that they were serving their people and building a glorious future for their country. This proves the falsehood of the libel that khadi workers are mere mercenaries. That they may be misguided in persisting in a programme which is at best an anachronism is another matter. But the fact is beyond question that many of these earnest young men are at their post at considerable personal discomfort and sacrifice. If they were driven out of the organisation, as they were during this so called no-tax campaign, it was not they who suffered, it was the cause, whatever it might be, that was the poorer for losing their devotion and service.

## SECRET UNTO THE LAST

The ultimate fate of the no-tax campaign is rather obscure. Nobody was willing to take responsibility for it. Whenever the local revenue official called for the payment he was referred to the Head Office. The revenue officials, most of whom were sympathetic towards the Charkha, were put in an awkward situation. Their duty was not to refer to anybody residing outside their jurisdiction. They had to take action. In some instances, they conducted the farce of distraint and sale of Charkhas and other belongings of the A. I. S. A. and themselves paid the money due. But such payments could not be made by the officials in the case of the insurance premium which was a large amount. I understand that the Head Office finally relented in this matter and allowed the payment of the premium.

The Government never knew that there was really a no-tax campaign on and to this day the public do not know. The campaign started in secrecy and ended in secrecy. Such hole and corner methods are abhorrent to the teachings of the Mahatma whom I have endeavoured to study and to follow. Indeed, such methods do not conform to the ordinary standards of fair play. We laid down a new law for an open and non-violent fight. We set up a new standard and led the opponent to expect us to keep to our standard. In this instance we gave up our professions and desired to take advantage of both the old and the new methods. The Government, at any rate in Madras, took khadi workers on trust and did not suspect that they were hatching any secret political campaign. I did not give out the story till now. I am now giving it out because it will no longer do any harm to anybody. Indeed, during the present excitement, it may

add further *kudos* to those whom I am criticising. But these facts have to be recorded to help in the final assessment of the worth of Gandhism.

#### DRIFT

I was disappointed that the Mahatma, the president of the A. I. S. A., completely ignored this serious matter after he came out of prison. I expected him to condemn the secret politics indulged in by the A. I. S. A. He did nothing of the kind and allowed the people responsible for it to continue in authority. When I drew his attention to these happenings in a letter, he replied blandly that he never gave permission to any khadi worker to take part in politics. While my attitude was correct according to his principles, he did not bother about the violations. That attitude was to me a revelation. It brought home to me the tremendous fact that the Mahatma had lost his grip, and was drifting. Till now I used to delight in him, whether I followed him or I opposed him. Whether right or wrong he meant something. There was substance in him to grapple with. He was a reality. Now that reality has vanished. Drift is something unreal. This revelation led me once again to question the fundamentals of Gandhism. Were not my original objections to them still valid? Was it right for me to discard what my reason indicated as correct? Was it not sheer laziness on my part to take shelter behind the character of the Engineer in the Russian story? Was not my hope that Jawaharlal Nehru would effect a change in Congress Leadership misplaced? Was not Pal's idea of a spitting programme for my people a ridiculous snare? At long last, after a lifetime spent in practising Gandhism, I was driven to my original attitude of scepticism.

How should I account for this drift? My mind went back to its previous verdict. There is nothing to grip and hence the drift. The Charkha is not rooted in reality. It has

no bearing on current economic and political conditions. It is a fiction that is kept alive by exploiting the anti-British sentiment in India. Our people will do anything to get rid of the foreign yoke. The Mahatma has put us to the task of spinning, holding out as the prize freedom from the yoke. The yoke is going not because we obeyed the Mahatma and spun but because of the force of world events, because of the defeat of Hitler, because the world is tired of Imperialisms, certainly not because of our practising Gandhism. China, Indonesia, Persia, and Egypt are all getting their dues because the world cannot withhold them any longer. India will get her due share because she is otherwise ripe for it. Not because she took to the spinning wheel. If anything, the wheel will prove a hindrance in the further progress of India towards her destiny.

#### BLACK MARKET

Look at what is happening to the Charkha at this moment. People are asked to spin if they would wear Khadi. Khadi sale depots refuse to sell to buyers who do not offer handspun yarn as part of the purchase money. The implication is that every khadi wearer should either directly or indirectly participate in the production of yarn. Spinning has become a compulsory symbol of patriotism. Spinning is done not with a view to the achievement of an economic objective but as part of the symbolism of the Gandhian creed. It serves the same purpose to day that the *Tilak*, the *caste mark*, the *Naman* and the *Vibhuthi* served in days of old. It is part of the sacred daily routine, the *ablutions*, the *Sandhya* etc. Prayerful souls should tack it on to their morning and evening communion with God. Others less pious may consider this new addition to their routine a veritable nuisance unless they have political ambitions. The

politically minded must pay the price if they would get into the favoured circle. The price is not heavy considering the return. The result has been not a stimulus to hand spinning but the creation of a black market for khadi. The war and its aftermath have produced black markets in such abundance that the addition of one more to the number is scarcely noticeable.

One possible objection to my argument will be that I am building too heavily on a slender foundation. Granting that Charkha work miscarried during the war, what is there to demonstrate, one may well ask, that Charkha work cannot be carried on on the right lines at any later time. My answer to that objection is that the failure of the Charkha during the war was not an accident. The war served only as an opportunity to bring to the fore a defect which had lurked inside all along. The people who put on khadi and the people who help to produce it are all driven by an overwhelming necessity to obey the word of the Mahatma. There is no conviction behind it all. The effort is not voluntary and spontaneous, it is something super-imposed. The inevitable result is a blatant duplicity which pervades not only khadi work but the whole course of our politics.

I have given a faithful account of my trip to the Sun, that centre of the Solar System which is known as the constructive programme. If the facts disclosed regarding the nature of the Sun are true, the facts and inferences to which these facts lead should be true of every planet that revolves round that Sun. If the presumptions underlying the Charkha are wrong and if it cannot be worked except by giving up principles vital to its sustenance, it follows that the other items of the programme like the propagation of Hindi, the abolition of Untouchability and the achievement of Hindu-Muslim Unity are also on the wrong track.

### III SOME PLANETS.

A. I. V. I. A.

It is possible for me to carry the reader through a series of trips to the various planets, those satellites of the Charkha, which constitute the Solar system. Such a detailed investigation would fill several volumes and would be futile in the atmosphere now prevailing in the country when people do not have the time for cogitation and research and are in a great hurry to join the race for slogan-mongering. I shall content myself with offering a few remarks about some of those items of the constructive programme with which I had something to do. Closely allied to the Charkha and interlocked with it at all points is the movement for the revival of village industries. The organisation in charge of this item is called the A. I. V. I. A. with its Head Office at Wardha. The A. I. V. I. A. has not received that attention from the disciples of the Mahatma which has been bestowed upon the A. I. S. A. The outstanding features of this item are hand-pounding of rice, the extraction of oil by the village Gani, preparation of soap out of fuller's earth, etc.

#### HAND-MADE PAPER

Considerable success was achieved in an attempt to produce handmade paper at a research centre established at Poona. The Congress Government of Bombay extended financial help to that centre with the result that samples of paper were turned out which could compare favourably with foreign handmades. The remarkable feature of the handmade paper industry is that it can stand competition with the mills which no other hand process can. The handmade paper

receives, during the felting of its pulp, what is called a four-way-shake to reinforce the fibres which process cannot be manipulated by any mechanical means. Many foreign countries still manufacture paper by the hand process for special purposes. Given the same grade of pulp, hand-felting not only produces a stronger paper but also a technically superior grade. But all these advantages in hand lifting of paper can be availed of only with the best grade of pulp. The best pulps can be made only by treatment of rags and other material through power-driven machinery. The so-called handmade paper prepared out of pulp made through the village Denki is the weakest paper imaginable and has no economic value under modern conditions. Handmade paper manufactured in foreign countries is a beautiful synthesis of mechanical and manual processes which it would be profitable for our own country to adopt. Keeping this fact well in view, the worker in charge of the Poona paper-research centre insisted on and obtained from the Mahatma permission to use electric power for the making of the pulp. Though the Mahatma gave formal permission to use power, the High Command of the A. I. V. I. A, frowned upon the departure from orthodoxy, with the result that the Poona research centre was discouraged and the worker in charge was thrown out of the organisation.

When I think of the Poona paper research centre, I am reminded of the fate of the Gandhinagar workshop. These two attempts to modernise the village industries, to yoke the power of scientific discoveries for the benefit of the villager, to put some sense into a programme which is essentially illogical, have been vigorously combated and finally suppressed by the might of that Inner Circle which is in sole possession and enjoyment of the Gandhian heritage. This circle is extremely orthodox. It will go to any length to preserve external



formalities, but it does not care for, neither does it understand, the inwardness of that industrial reconstruction for lack of which the masses in India are famishing.

### CONFUSION OF THOUGHT

There is nothing wrong about village industries, as such. Every country is endowed by nature with industries suitable to the level of civilisation that that country has attained. As I said above, primitive Sampans and Rickshaws are in use in millions all over China and the Far East. Japan prohibited the use of Rickshaws and Sampans the moment she emerged out of her primitive economy. In India we have a peculiar mixture of the East and the West, the advanced and the primitive. The Catamarans and the Charkha symbolise the depths from which our peoples are struggling to find an escape. In a sense, therefore, we are more backward than China which discarded the Catamaran and the Charkha long ago. But we have been in closer touch with the West than the Chinese. The subjugation of our country by the British, though it has inevitably bred into us a hatred of all things British and Western, has nevertheless brought in also the fruits of modern science in a measure which is not available to the Chinese and the Far Eastern peoples. We are more industrialised than China, although the British conquerers did not want us to be industrialised. This unconscious and unintended gift of access to modern science and technology is an asset which no patriot should throw away despite the rankling ill-will that we justifiably feel towards our rulers. The village industries movement, as conceived by the Mahatma, is based upon just that mistake which every patriot should avoid. We should learn to distinguish between the British ruling class and the Western Democracy and civilization which was the cradle of Science. The fruits of scientific

discoveries are the heritage of all humanity. Let us not cast away our patrimony in a petulant mood because we detest the medium through which that patrimony is conveyed to us. The Charkha movement and the village industries movement are but expressions of that petulance. It may be that the Mahatma has a philosophy which discards all science and civilization but that philosophy would not be acceptable to the masses of our people who hunger for a higher level of life and who are impatient to reach the vanguard of the Nations. Owing to a lack of discrimination, modern machinery and civilization are tarred with the same brush as foreign rule. This confusion of thought has brought into being the A. I. S. A. and the A. I. V. I. A. and their futile orthodoxy which is sheer formalism without substance.

#### THE REAL MOTIVE

But is it merely a confusion of thought? The putting back of the clock of progress, the turning away from the trend of civilization, is too serious and too deliberate a step to be taken because of a transient aberration. The revival of Cottage Industries necessitates the re-building of the ancient village economy based upon the Caste system. The earlier writings and the talks of the Mahatma have demonstrated that the dominating passion of his life is the revival of Caste which he believes is the essence of Hinduism. The mighty effort that he puts forth for the resuscitation of Cottage Industries is motivated by his religion. The exodus to the towns from the villages is part of the exodus of the people of India from primitive economy to modern civilisation. We cannot go back to the villages without going back to the primitivism of Caste rule. Millions of people belonging to the oppressed Castes have sought relief and salvation by cutting away from their village moorings and emigrating to

the towns. The same motive has driven several lakhs of our people to emigrate overseas, as labourers to plantation in Africa, Malaya, Burma, Fiji and Ceylon. However miserable the conditions of these people may be in those foreign countries when compared with the status of other races in those countries, it is an undoubted fact that their living conditions are infinitely better than what they would be in their village homes; and no humanitarian could view with satisfaction the movement to repatriate Indian Labour from the foreign countries and the cities to their Caste-ridden villages. The slogan "Go back to the village" really means "Go back to the Caste system". The railways and the Mills have been great levellers of Caste. The rapid spread of machine industries will destroy Caste forever. It is that fear which is at the root of the movement for the revival of the village industries in opposition to modern mechanised industries.

#### LINGUA FRANCA

The biggest planet revolving round the Sun, that is the Charkha, is the Hindi movement. The simple argument behind that movement is based upon the fact that Hindi is spoken by a larger number of Indians than any other language. *Ergo*, argues the Mahatma, if there is to be political unity in India, the non-Hindi speaking peoples should adopt Hindi as a second language. Using the same argument, Tamil should have been adopted as the official language for the Madras Presidency. With greater reason, Englishmen may argue, especially after the coming into being of the World Government under the UNO, that since English is spoken by more people in the world than any other language, English should be the world language. Argument based on numbers does not take us far. If irrational spelling is a handicap to

#### SOME PLANETS

the English language, the complexity of its alphabet is no less a handicap to Hindi. Many of the languages in India have reached a higher stage of evolution than Hindi and the peoples speaking those languages feel a rancour in their hearts when asked to subordinate their mother tongues to the super-imposed Hindi language. These non-Hindi languages are not only richer in their literature but have more advanced grammar and simpler and finer diction. For instance, the imposition of gender upon the names of inanimate objects is a survival from the childhood of man when he thought of everything in terms of sex. More than its grammar, the Hindi script, based upon *Nagari*, makes it unsuitable for general adoption. The mastery of over 300 symbols before learning to read or write is a permanent obstacle to the spread of literacy in that language. Kemal, Ata Turk, succeeded in transforming the illiteracy of the Turkish population almost overnight into the full bloom of literacy by the magic wand of script reform.

#### NETAJI LEADS

The problem of illiteracy can be tackled in this country only on the lines adopted by the Ata Turk. One of the remarkable incidents in the life of Subhas Chandra Bose, who has captured the imagination of Young India as *Netaji*, was his courage in opposing Gandhism and in advocating the Romanising of the scripts of all the Indian languages. I sat spell bound with admiration when he delivered his Presidential Address before the Haripura Congress placing before the Indian People the idea of introducing the Roman script not only for achieving a measure of unity among the multifarious languages in India but also for simplifying and modernising them. The curse of Babel has afflicted not only India but every country in the world and the method of

combating this curse is not by adopting the rule-of-thumb method of inflicting the majority languages on the minorities. Human problems cannot be solved by such rough and ready measures without regard to the feelings of the peoples affected. Let us remember that, in the post-Atomic age, National frontiers are crumbling into dust and it will not be worth while for peoples to achieve the brands of separate Nationalities at the terrific cost of language impositions. Such impositions are too great a price for the tinsel robe of National exclusiveness which is already at a discount. The world has so far shrunk in size that Nationality has become not only a handicap but also a label of inferiority among the aspirants who are in search of human unity, human freedom, and human self-expression.

#### ENGLISH IN OTHER LANDS

I am not saying that the mother tongues of the world are disappearing but that they have consciously assumed a secondary role. In my wanderings through Russia, China, and Japan, I witnessed huge populations making prodigious efforts to learn the English language. English is the language of the intelligentsia all over the world. The prejudice created in India against the English language by Gandhian propaganda is not only unreasonable but unpatriotic. English is the only means by which science and all the amenities of modern civilization can permeate our huge population. English education was imposed on us by our rulers out of selfish motives; but it so happened that this act of tyranny has, owing to a historical accident, turned into a blessing. If the Communist Government of Russia and the Mikado's Dictatorship of Japan could drive their peoples with cat-o-nine tails to learn the English language at double quick time inspite of their rabid Nationalisms and their hatred of Britain,

we should realise the great advantage that that language confers upon a people intent on the acquisition of the technique of industrial processes. India has a vast wealth in her numerous intelligentsia and all that wealth will go to waste if the prevailing hatred of the English tongue is persisted in. The imposition of Hindi as the second language in the place of English would drain away all the scientific and technical skill which the history of our country during the past three hundred years has placed at our disposal and for the acquisition of which not only our generation but several generations of our forebears have toiled and sweated. The superficially patriotic may ask the question, why not get rid of this intelligentsia bred on English and create a new intelligentsia based on Hindi, if that would accord better with the National sentiment? For the answer to this question I need only point out the happenings in the Soviet Union. During the Russian revolution it was necessary to kill the Royalists who were the land-holders and the money-lenders, but it was not quite so necessary to commit the wholesale murder of the Teachers, the Scientists, the Engineers and other Technicians. Having got rid of the entire intelligentsia in a most ruthless holocaust, the revolutionaries had to begin all over again by creating at a painfully slow pace a new intelligentsia which was found ultimately to be on all fours with the old intelligentsia. The great privations and sacrifices that Russia endured through her series of five year plans were largely made up of the price she paid for importing and replacing the intelligentsia which she wantonly destroyed during the revolution. The present "learn Hindi" propaganda based upon a transient anti-English sentiment is a similar act of wanton destruction of our intelligentsia for which we shall have to pay with sweat and tears if not with blood in the days to come.

## ANTI-HINDI MOVEMENT

I do not rule out the possibility of a bloody outburst as a reaction against this ill considered drive to spread Hindi at any cost. The Mahatma has learnt nothing from the anti-Hindi movement conducted during the Congress regime in Madras. It is no use ignoring that evil foreboding. That movement might have been a parody of civil resistance, Satyagraha, as contemplated by the Mahatma. Parody or not, it was certainly a protest and had, at any rate, the passive support of many in South India who resented the crudeness of Hindi Prachar and the threat it foreboded of the removal of the blessings of science which were already reaching them through the medium of the English language. Anti-Hindi is already a plank in the Pakistan platform. It would be wisdom, it would be statesmanship, to learn from such tiny indications as the anti-Hindi outburst, the depths of popular feeling stirred by compulsory propagation of Hindi.

## COUNTERPOISE

To compensate for the sacrifice imposed upon the youth in the form of Hindi learning a kind of emotional counterpoise is offered in the form of extra emphasis placed upon the mother tongue. The movement is a-foot, not only for dividing India on the basis of language but also to impart higher education in the mother tongue. It is my humble submission to those who have not yet sacrificed their intelligence to their emotion that any attempt to oust English in college and technological education would lead to disaster. It would create a permanent impediment to the process of rapid industrialisation which is the crying need of our famishing population. It would take many decades to discover new terminologies and publish text books to learn higher science through Indian languages. Meanwhile the progress of science, of civilization, will have to mark time.

## GODDESS

This extra emphasis upon language is a sort of emotional counter-blast, natural in people in whom centuries of foreign domination has created an inferiority complex. Unnecessary and irrational sentiment attached to mere vocabulary, script and grammar has served as subconscious compensation to our injured self-respect. But we should learn to grow out of this complex in the spacious days of freedom that lie ahead of us. After all, let us remember that language is a means to an end. It is not an end in itself. It is not a thing to be worshipped. Let us no longer indulge in such sob-stuff which cries out for blood in the holy name of the goddess of language. What is there sacred about any language? In the ultimate analysis, every language is but the accumulation of vocal habits acquired by a group of people. There is a multiplicity of languages in the world because the forebears of humanity lived their primitive lives as isolated groups; and the affinity between languages is accounted for by the facilities for intercourse that became periodically available to these groups otherwise isolated. If we examine the history of languages we can discover revolutionary transformations not only in the script but also in the vocabulary and grammar of every living language. Rigidity in a language always spelt death. Why not allow the languages to continue to be supple, to grow, to borrow, to lend, to change, in fact to live, to coalesce and if possible to become one? Lately, the Mahatma has heaped ridicule and contempt upon Esperanto. Idealism always looks contemptible to the conservative. But if there is to be hope for humanity, if ever peace is to reign on earth and feud and blood letting to become a thing of the past, humanity will have to become one in culture and in language. Against this background of an albeit distant idealism, the drive for Hindi learning is distinctly perceived as a reaction.



### HARIJAN

Let me take the reader over to another planet of the Solar system. These ethereal hops may not thrill the reader since the patterns of the stellar bodies exhibit a monotonous uniformity. Our surveys are therefore rapid and I am omitting all the tiresome details. We are now landed in the planet 'Harijan'. The term signifies people who worship *Hari*, one of the Hindu Trinity. Since the worshippers of any one of the three gods of the Trinity regard the worshippers of the other two as aliens belonging to another religion, this term Harijan does not command universal acceptance of all the Hindus. But the Mahatma uses it to denote the entire class of untouchables throughout India. This appellation which implies special nearness to one of the gods is a kind of spiritual compensation for their misery offered to the worst exploited people in the whole world. The movement is conducted with a view to make the untouchables better Hindus so as to facilitate their ascent in the spiritual realm, entirely ignoring their material cravings. Untouchability is said to be a blot upon the Hindu religion which is otherwise pure. If the untouchables could be lifted up from their present degradation and made the spiritual equals of other communities, it is argued, the whole problem could be solved.

### GITA

The entire fallacy in this propaganda consists in the presumption that untouchability is a sort of over-growth, something extraneous, which has trespassed into the Hindu religion and could be removed without in any way affecting the tenets and practices of that strange amalgam of diversities which is roughly described as Hinduism. The Mahatma himself has attempted to give shape and colour to the term Hindu by confining it to those who regard the Gita in the

same relation as the Christians regard the Bible and the Muslims regard the Koran. Taking the term Hindu in this limited application we are inevitably led to conclude that those who question the authority of the Gita, are out of the fold of Hinduism. Any unsophisticated reader of the text of the Gita will perceive that Krishna was at pains to persuade Arjuna to fight and kill his relations, which Arjuna was disinclined to do. The argument of Krishna was that since Arjuna was born in the warrior caste, it was his duty to fight. Krishna said that He, the God, created the castes and assigned specific duties to every one at the moment of birth by assigning each to a caste which carried along with it a series of duties. It was not open to mere man to change what God had ordained. Arjuna was born in the warrior caste and had, therefore, no option but to fight and to kill his relations. Various glosses are put on these texts to conceal the crudeness of this argument. One such gloss is that the fight referred to in the Gita is not physical but spiritual. The relations who are to be killed are not men but the evil qualities of man. Another gloss seeks to lessen the rigidity of caste by saying that it does not attach to birth but to the qualities i.e., to the character of the individual. Whatever that may be, the central fact which cannot be glossed away is that the book was written with a view to justify and perpetuate the caste system. Caste is nothing if it is not a graded system of untouchability with the Brahmin, the unpolluted, at the top, the Kshatriya, the warrior caste, occupying the next inferior position, and so on down to the untouchable who occupies the bottom rung of the ladder. Untouchability is the central principle of the teaching of the Gita. No one can speak against untouchability without denying the teaching of the Gita and laying the axe at the root of the entire caste system based on colour-prejudice, *Varnashrama*.

## MAHATMA DEFENDS CASTE

The Mahatma in his younger days spoke brave words in defence of caste. A few quotations may be apposite. The Mahatma wrote in *Young India* in 1920 :—

"I have received several angry letters about my remarks during my Deccan tour on the Caste system. I am not publishing these letters because there is nothing but vituperation in them...They argue that the retention of the Caste system spells ruin for India and that it is Caste which has reduced India to slavery. In my opinion, it is not Caste that has made us what we are. I believe that Caste has saved Hinduism from disintegration. I consider the four divisions alone to be fundamental, natural and essential. I am certainly against any attempt at destroying the fundamental divisions...The Caste system is not based on inequality, there is no question of inferiority...I am inclined to think that the law of heredity is an eternal law and any attempt to alter that law must lead, as it has before led, to utter confusion...If Hindus believe, as they must believe, in reincarnation and in transmigration, they must know that nature will without any possibility of mistake adjust the balance by degrading a Brahmin, if he misbehaves himself, by reincarnating him in a lower division, and translating one who lives the life of a Brahmin in his present incarnation to Brahmin-hood in his next...I am prepared to defend, as I have always done, the division of Hindus into four Castes..... The spirit behind Caste is not one of arrogant superiority, it is the classification of different

systems of self-culture. It is the best possible adjustment of social stability and progress. It trusts to the principle of heredity and being only a system of culture does not hold that any injustice is done, if an individual or a family has to remain in a particular group in spite of their decision to change their mode of life for the better...It is no use denying the fact that a sort of hierarchy has been evolved on the Caste system, but it cannot be called the creation of the Brahmins. When all Castes accept a common goal of life, a hierarchy is inevitable because all Castes cannot realise the ideal in equal degree".

#### RETRIBUTION

It is clear, then, that at one time the Mahatma considered the caste system as the very essence of Hinduism. His attitude blasted the hopes of many young men, who dedicated their lives to the destruction of this evil. It may be that the march of time has brought its painful lessons and the Mahatma would like to unsay much of what he had said on the subject. Indeed, there are indications that he does not want his followers to take all his past writings too literally. But such back door exits are rather unseemly. A subject of this far reaching importance has to be faced and dealt with with all the seriousness which it deserves. No one should stand on his prestige and strike up an easy attitude of *non-chalance* when already grave injustice has been done and damages have occurred which will project into the future unless open and deliberate action is taken in the present to undo the mischief. If the Gita is right, then the caste system is right, then untouchability is also right. You cannot declaim against untouchability and cling on to caste and chant the Gita

every evening and morning. Such flagrant inconsistency is unbecoming. You may walk away with it for a short while. But time will bring its own nemesis and the flamboyant and imposing structure of Gandhism based upon such inconsistency will vanish like the thin air over night. Ambedkar may be suppressed, untouchability may be continued under the glorified name of Harijan, but the political and economic freedom of the people will recede further into the background like a mirage.

#### HINDU—MUSLIM

I shall not prolong these trips I am providing the reader in the imaginary air-ship through the stratosphere. There is no need to take him to all the eighteen visible planets and to the many invisible satellites of the solar system of the Gandhian universe. But one last hop is inevitable and absolutely essential for a proper comprehension of the secrets of the system. Away then, we dash through space. We arrive at another new world. It is called Hindu-Muslim Unity. This phrase, which has been repeated day in and day out throughout the long period of the Gandhian sway of Indian politics, has produced an effect the opposite of that intended by the Mahatma. Let us therefore investigate this problem right from the fundamentals.

#### DIVIDE ET IMPERA

This slogan, Hindu-Muslim Unity, pre-supposes the existence of a virulent disunity as between the two religious groups. Whether it is necessary and inevitable for us to view the people of India as consisting of rival religious groupings, it is futile for us now to go into. They have been so considered from times before the Gandhian era. Probably the division was created by the designing

foreign power intent upon a policy of *divide et impera*. Probably it is a survival which the foreign power inherited from the Moghul Rule. In my wanderings through Russia I heard at Baku, the Caspian sea port which is the capital of one of the Caucasian republics, that during the reign of the Czars, through the streets of Baku periodically ran rivers of blood caused by Christian-Muslim conflicts instigated by the Czarist emissaries in order to divert people's attention from the injustices and the inequities perpetrated by the Imperialists. Whatever might be the evils of the Soviet Administration, it conferred this one lasting blessing upon its citizens. It saved them for ever from the bloody conflicts based on religious differences.

#### SECULARISM THE WAY OUT

At the time when I visited Russia, Soviet propaganda was all out for militant atheism and eradication of all religions. The Officials took credit for the cessation of religious feuds and attributed it to their own anti-religious policy. I used to delight in the dream that a similar transformation might overtake India and we might once for all forget all our religious quarrels, whether Hindu-Muslim or *Vadakalai-Thenkalai*. But that was a dream merely. In the political atmosphere of India there was no scope for entertaining even the remotest idea of abolishing religion. In India we approached the religious problem from an angle the opposite of that adopted by the Soviets. Our leadership sought to solve the conflict not by blocking up the source from which originated this conflict, but by opening it out more fully in order that the diversity may, out of its very plenty, unite into a single stream and not break up into rivalries. The result has been tragic. We may not agree that the Russian method is the right one; nevertheless, we

cannot avoid the conclusion that the Indian method is the wrong one. India should have avoided the extremes and taken a middle course, a *via media* between the Russian and the Gandhian methods. Our politics should have been secularised. The Congress was secular to start with. The fundamental mistake was committed in 1919 by the Mahatma when he started the Khilafat agitation. Jinnah opposed that attempt to import religion into politics. His opposition cost him dearly. He had to leave the Congress. It is easy nowadays to revile at the President of the Muslim League. But how can we in decency forget that he was for long not only a member of the Congress but a tower of strength to that organisation? He was the President of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee. The Congress House in Bombay was named after him in recognition of the magnificent service he had rendered to that body. They have now camouflaged the name by altering it into "The People's Jinnah Hall."

#### KHILAFAT

Jinnah was driven out of the Congress by the fury of the blind forces of religious fanaticism that was ushered in under the auspices of the Mahatma. The Khilafat agitation was an attempt to stir up religious hysteria to secure a political objective. Hysteria never wins a cause. It is always a liability, as was proved by the results of that ill-fated Khilafat agitation. We did not save the Khilafat. But we have achieved Pakistan all right. The real enemy of the Khilafat proved to be not designing British Imperialism but resurgent Turkish Nationalism. The Mahatma started his movement to save the Khalif from the peril of loss of territory that threatened him at the end of World War number one, as punishment for his collaboration with the German Kaiser. But all the storm and thunder raised in

India availed nothing before the rising tide of the new spirit in Turkey which swept off the old order at one stroke. The Khilafat was but the emblem of the old world which had no place in the new Turkey. Jinnah was proved to be right. The Mahatma was certainly wrong in regard to the Khilafat.

#### REALIST:

The only result of the Khilafat agitation was the fanning of the dying embers of religion in this country. Fanaticism both of the Muslim and the Hindu variety was aflame. It was not a congenial atmosphere for sane politics. Indian statesmanship had to step aside and watch helplessly the mad career of a popular upheaval bereft of the guidance of reason. But a politician cannot for ever desert his people however misguided they may be. He has to take note of the weakness of his people and serve them. Jinnah saw what the weakness was of his people, of his country, which was overrun by the religious politics of the Mahatma. He realised that during the Gandhian era the people of this country would be unable to divest their politics of religion. If he would serve his people, Jinnah should put on the religious garb and talk the Gandhian language. As a realist, Jinnah accepted the condition imposed on him by circumstances beyond his control. He revived the Muslim League because he had no place inside the Congress which had become a Hindu religious body. Today we witness the strange phenomenon of that very religious politics which drove Jinnah out of the Congress sustaining him securely as the leader of the Muslim League.

#### MUSLIM MIND

People who revile at the two-nation theory have not the imagination to comprehend the working of the Muslim mind. From his childhood onwards the Muslim is brought



up in an atmosphere of hatred of all idolatry. An educated and cultured Muslim may tolerate the company of Hindu idolaters, he may even do business and have social intercourse with the Hindu; but, he will not participate in any function which smells of idolatry. The Gandhian Congress reeks with a pompous religiosity which brings up idolatry every moment. The Congress sessions are interwoven with prayers to sundry gods and goddesses. Every public appearance of the Mahatma is but an incident in a full throated prayer addressed to the Hindu Pantheon. It does not require much imagination to assess the feeling of the Mussalman who may stray into any Gandhian meeting. The music and the *Bhajan* so nauseate him that they either inflame him into fanatic violence or drive him out of the assembly. Is it any wonder that few Muslims attend these vast concourses where the Mahatma is scheduled to appear? No Muslim who believes in his religion can attend a meeting addressed by the Mahatma without serious qualms of conscience. Of course, the Koran is included in the agenda of the meeting. It is assigned a minor part along with the Bible, the Zend Avesta, and other sacred lore of other religions. But that is poor consolation for the Muslim aroused to a sense of his religion. He finds the whole proceeding a travesty of all that he holds sacred and turns away from the place in anger. How can he tolerate his own Prophet and his Allah getting mixed up with the worship of those very idols which his Prophet had condemned? It is not mere fanaticism but the appreciation of the inwardness of his own faith which makes it impossible for him to put that faith on a footing of equality with other faiths. This is so patent that, but for the warping of his vision by emotion, every Hindu will see it clearly.

## TOLERANCE

There is and there should be tolerance practised as between the religions. Such tolerance should be manifested in segregating and keeping apart the rival faiths from coming into contact with each other. The liberal Muslim is prepared to allow the Hindu to pray and to practise his idolatry inside the temple or at home. Every citizen's house is his castle. If a person wants to practise the dangerous game of mixing up religions he can do so within the privacy of his home. He cannot play with fire at a public place, he cannot mix up Hindu and Muslim prayers at political meetings without inviting trouble.

## MIX-UP

Why, and indeed why, should there be at all such a mix-up of religion as attempted by the Mahatma? Where is the need for it? Do politicians in other countries behave in this manner and invite trouble? Why do we not see, even at this eleventh hour, that every minute of *Ram Dhum* lays the axe at the root of Hindu-Muslim unity and creates a fresh argument for the establishment of Pakistan? It is the fashion among the critics of Indian Nationalism to deplore our disunion based on religious differences and ascribe it to the evil heritage of our history. "What is the use," these wise men cry out, "of struggling against history? India is not like any other country. They, in India, have religious feuds, hence their Nationalism is weak." These wise men are not wise, they are otherwise. We need not regret our history. Religion exists not only in our country but in all other countries also. But, in other lands, there are politicians who have imbibed the time spirit and know what to do with their religion. Here, in India, we are saddled with a leadership which has no knowledge of the march of time, which plans its political action in the twentieth century on a chart intended for the middle ages.

## RIP VAN WINKLES

Let us not forget that our difficulties are of our own creation. Our leaders of today, our politicians who mouth fine phrases regarding National freedom, are directly responsible for reviving superstitions that should have been buried long ago and placing them in the path of National progress, pretending all the while that these survivals are not hindrances in the way but constitute the force which would pull us along towards our destiny. This mental perversity which yokes the skeletons in the museum to drag the coach of our Nationalism has created for us the Hindu-Muslim problem. We shall have to pay the price for our perversity in the form of a divided India unless we mend our political manners. We cannot establish mass contact with the Muslims as long as we use political gatherings for *Bhajan*. Every public recitation of *Ram Dhum* is a nail driven into the coffin of Hindu-Muslim Unity. Religious politics pertains to the middle ages. Jinnah is not responsible for the demand for Pakistan. He was driven to it by our Rip Van Winkles.

## IV THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

### KARMA

We have seen enough of the solar system of the Mahatma's conception to enable us to assess its real worth. No doubt there was an intention to serve our people at the bottom of it all. The motive was praise-worthy. A few of the items are innocuous, like service of the aborigines. This is not a judicial trial and we are not concerned with motives. What matters is the actual achievement, the fruit that results from the programme. Judged by the results, the constructive programme is a complete failure. The solar system has no logic to sustain it and to brighten its path. It is a dream born out of the darkness which leads colour and fearful shape to dim memories of antiquity. The sooner we forget this dream the brighter will be the prospect. The sooner we rid the National movement of this obsession the easier will be the path of our people towards National recovery. Social and economic reconstruction of a fifth of the human race that inhabit the vast sub-continent of India will be greatly facilitated by the casting away of this obstruction which blocks the path like our *Karma*.

### VOTES

The reader may well ask the question: how does it happen that if all that I have said is correct regarding the constructive programme, it is so popular? how does it happen that it secures votes en masse at every election? how does it happen that it attracts crowds not in thousands but in lakhs? how does it happen that it has gained the approbation not merely of the ignorant and the illiterate but also of the educated, the cultured, the intelligentsia? Dare I assert that

nobody but myself knows the truth about this matter? Am I the only wise man among the four hundred millions? Not at all. On the contrary, I am recording here the thoughts of most Indians who have bestowed thought on the matter. This book contains no secrets. The facts portrayed are known, indeed, well known. But such is our country. Known facts are neither acknowledged nor acted up to. Every thinking Indian, and there are plenty of them, knows in his heart that what I have said is true. Nobody, even in the omnipotent Inner Circle, either believes in or practises the programme. But, all of them, including those in the outermost circle, vociferously acclaim their solidarity with the author of the programme. At every meeting, a forest of hands shoots up in formal support of every item of the programme; but when it comes to practice, all this support vanishes into thin air. When it comes to getting down to the brass tacks they all turn back.

#### CROWD MIND

This is a phenomenon in psychology not peculiar to our country. However, it happens that politicians in other countries sail clear of this psychological danger. They understand the crowd mind which finds it impossible to resist the enthusiasm of the meeting place. They realise that when it is a question of the tiresome details, the daily toil, the pin pricks, the vexatious delays, the senseless local opposition etc. which form the routine of the field worker, all the enthusiasm vanishes. A programme conceived amidst the excitement of the public meeting, even when the programme is well conceived and logical, often gets denied in practice. But this constructive programme had not in it the saving grace of logic to pull it out of the mire of neglect which is the after effect of mass demonstrations. The result has been

that the programme ceased to take root and to grow. It remained where it was left by the enthusiastic crowds at the meetings. It has been tossed about from one meeting to another. It has had a stormy support at every one of the meetings but it lay dead between the meetings, that important period of incubation when it should have acquired its life giving qualities, when it should have taken nourishment and put on its plumage. No doubt the constructive programme has been popular, but it has been nothing else. It wins votes. It wins nothing else. The lakhs and lakhs of hands that rise up in meetings to vote for the Charkha never turn the wheel. They stop with voting for it.

#### SPLIT PERSONALITY

This peculiar phenomenon which amounts to a split personality in our people has its reactions in every sphere of National life. We are not one life inside the body. We are not single minded. We practise a dualism which amounts to a duplicity. Before the Mahatma, we say ditto to every thing that he says or fancies. Behind his back, we do not bother about our promises or our oaths. In other countries, under other circumstances, this would amount to cheating. But in our country, under the spell of the Mahatma, we have become so used to such dual personality that we have lost all consciousness of it. We do not practise what we have promised to the Mahatma because we know it cannot be practised. Our failure is not that we have not practised it, but that we had not the courage to say No to the Mahatma. Why should we say No and make ourselves notorious, when everybody else says Yes and walks away with it without ever thinking of delivering the goods?

## EFFERVESCENCE

And so it happens that our National upheaval has ended in effervescence, words without meaning, resolutions that never turned into action. But yet we have achieved something. We are achieving freedom. The British are quitting the country. We shall get Swaraj, which is what we set out to achieve twentyfive years ago under the leadership of the Mahatma. Thoughtful reader, please reflect. Swaraj may be coming. But did we achieve it? What is it that we did that has brought us Swaraj? Which of our resolutions and practices is related to the coming freedom as cause to effect?

## WHAT WE MISSED

Are we not getting freedom inspite of all that we have done to obstruct its coming? Is not Swaraj rushing to us owing to the might of world history which could not be resisted by all the impediments we wantonly placed in its way? Are we not riding over the crest of a wave which we did not create? Is it not a tide which the elemental forces have induced in the teeth of our opposition? Nature in her ramifications creates the sun and the stars, the sea and the hills, the wind and the rain. She has created the mighty current of world-history. Individuals and groups have their part to play in shaping the events of history. But they should function in alliance with history and in tune with her spirit. We cannot throw out a challenge at her and get away with it. The constructive programme is such a challenge. Politicians in other countries attune their conduct to the time spirit and thereby secure to their peoples the best that events could bestow. We, in India, have reviled at history and have obstructed her manifestation. In spite of our revilings, in spite of our obstructions, Nature is thrusting her benefits, her blessings, on us. Perhaps we could get more if we were in a more receptive mood. We might

have used the opportunity of the world war to jump to the vanguard of the Nations. Our mulish behaviour during that great crisis has condemned us to the back seat. Still, today we are jumping with joy and celebrating our victory. Why? Because we have secured this back seat? We have now some seat, after all? If we stop our shoutings, our eureka, we shall discover that we narrowly missed our seat at the forefront as one of the Big Four of the World. No power on earth could have denied us this miserable pittance that is given to us now with such flourish of trumpets.

#### THE MIXTURE

But what is the use of crying over spilt milk? Probably our inhibitions born out of our subject condition, our inferiority complex, could not permit us to act otherwise. I am not blaming anybody. This book is not intended to cavil at the Mahatma. I have spent a whole life-time at his shrine, often outdoing the others in my devotion, sometimes retreating in sheer disgust at the fanaticism of the vulgar crowd. On the whole, my devotional mood preponderated over the critical. I have been keenly aware of the shortcomings of the creed. But I have been proudly sensible of the abiding portion of the faith. The Mahatma has something in him which is living and something which is dead.

#### FLAMING WORDS

What is dead is the constructive programme, that solar system, the sun of the Charkha and its satellite planets including the latest that has appeared on the horizon, Nature Cure! That system is a fantastic fiction made up of survivals from the dark ages. What is living in the Mahatma is the original impetus which gave birth to the National upheaval that began in 1919. I do not mean the Khilafat. That spoilt the cause. I mean that passionate regard for



Truth and Non-Violence that he gave expression to on the Madras Beach: "*I am not anti-British. I am anti-untruth. I am anti-humbug.*" These flaming words should be trailed across the face of the whole world if it is to survive the menace of the enveloping darkness symbolised by the Atomic Bomb. There is nothing original in that impetus. The Mahatma did not invent it. Truth is not an invention. Non-violence is but another name for love which would rather persuade and reason with a fellow being than use the big stick. This cannot be an invention. This is the eternal quest of all humanity, of all life.

#### QUEST ETERNAL

The quest began when the *elan* entered the scene and began its battle with matter. The battle continued through all the sinuosities of the evolutionary development which has reached up to man. The battle will continue throughout the higher reaches of man's destiny. Truth is not a mere entity. It is not static. It is a movement, a flux. It is the process of life's fulfilment. Superficially viewed, it is a turmoil, a struggle for existence. That was the view that Hitler took. He drove his people to the mouth of the volcano. Hitler is gone, but it is well to remember that the menace to the world associated with his name is not ended. Racial domination by the practice of brutal violence is a phenomenon that has dogged humanity ever since the beginning of its history. Racialism was not born in Germany. It has been practised all over the world since prehistoric times. It has fired the imagination of every conqueror and every empire builder. South Africa is to-day a prey to its ugliness. Americans practise it towards the Negroes. The Dutch practise it towards the Indonesians. British Imperialism has reduced it to a science for the purpose of exploiting the teeming millions of India.

## MAHATMA'S ACHIEVEMENT

Racialism, or in the language of the Gita, *varnashrama*, goes hand in hand with violence symbolised by the battlefield of Kurukshetra. If humanity is to give up violence it should first shed its racial complex. If there is to be the rule of non-violence, *ahimsa*, we should give up caste. *varnashrama* leads only to Kurukshetra. The Mahatma's greatness is due to his having emphasised the inwardness of non-violence which is one aspect of truth in danger of being missed in modern times. Though *ahimsa* is not his discovery, still he has drawn attention to it in a manner which is compelling. But he has entirely ignored the other side of the medal. Non-violence implies the negation of racialism and the affirmation of the unity of humanity. What is living in the Mahatma is his great advocacy of non-violence. What is dead, or rather, what is reactionary in his teaching, is his revivalism which gives new life to the dead carcass of *varnashrama*.

## CONSTRUCTION BASED ON CASTE

The constructive programme belongs to the dead part of his teaching. At bottom, in an unperceived and unconscious manner, there is a desire, an attempt, to keep caste intact by keeping alive the old time village industries based upon the caste system. All the talk of reviving the village civilization of India is but an attempt to keep caste alive. Caste runs through and is imbedded in the village industries. The antagonism to science and machinery is but the manifestation of the unconscious repugnance to shed caste. Such shedding of caste would be inevitable if modern industrialism and the machine civilization are ushered into our country. I desire fully to recognise the merit of the Mahatma's grand attempt

to reinstate non-violence in all its glory as the embodiment of truth. But non-violence would be a half-truth amounting to the negation of truth if confused with the teaching of the Gita which is opposed to non-violence.

#### WORLD TEACHER

If *ahimsa* can be said to be a discovery, the merit of the discovery belongs to Gautama Buddha, the greatest Indian, the greatest human, that ever was. He made of non-violence the central theme of his teaching. But he was aware of its shortcomings. He was not a vegetarian. The story goes that he died because of a bone which stuck in his throat when he ate meat. The story was probably a later invention of his opponents to discredit him; but the fact is nevertheless indisputable, that he did not make a fetish of non-violence as so many of his followers have done. He assessed the doctrine at its real worth and was fully conscious of its limitations. In his hands, *ahimsa* put on its full bloom and was visible as reality, as truth. He did not make the mistake, which the Mahatma has unfortunately made, of yoking the doctrine of *ahimsa* to its opposite advocated in the Gita, the doctrine of *varnashrama*. The entire life of Buddha is a repudiation of the Gita. It would have been easy for him to go the way of the Gita and gain the admiration of the crowd in India. If he had taken that easy path, Buddhism would not have been expelled from India. But he took the difficult path of going against popular emotion because he knew that the way of truth lay away from the way of easy popularity.

#### THE MIGHT-HAVE-BEEN

Imagination reels at the thought of what might have happened to India and her teeming millions if the revival of the doctrine of non-violence under Gandhian auspices had adhered to the original direction indicated by Buddha. There

would have been no religious politics in our country. There would have been no demand for Pakistan. There would have been no chanting of the Gita. The problem of untouchability would have been solved. There would have been real non-violence showing the better way to the Nations of the world and not the make believe article which serves as but a warning. It is not too late yet. India has great lee-way to make up before she would reach her goal. She could yet make good her promise to lead the world along a new path to a greater destiny. But before she could do that, she must put her own house in order. She must work out a real revolution. She must give up the racial complex imbedded in the Gita.

## V EPILOGUE

### CASSANDRA

It is not pleasant to play the part of Cassandra. It makes one look odd, estranges friends, creates enemies. People look down on one. One becomes a stranger in one's own land. Nevertheless, circumstances — call them Providence or Fate, if you will — have conspired to assign that role to me. Hardly was the first edition of this book out, hardly was the ink dry on my writing about the inevitability of the Congress Governments enforcing the constructive programme, than the new Provincial Ministries began to act. The Government of Madras gave a lump grant of 3 crores for Khadi alone! I do hope they will not spend away that huge sum. In any case, it will be physically impossible for them to spend it all in the course of a single year. But they will manage to spend a good bit of it. I know what will happen to that good bit. It will, in effect, be wasted. Yes, every pie of it. The Khadi scheme of the Madras Government is a mad adventure which India's future historian will condemn roundly and without reserve. There was such a stampede of Gandhiites in the Legislature that the Opposition could scarcely record a protest. The voting of that grant by the Legislature was an indication of the utter demoralisation that has set in in the country. Congress orthodoxy felt so secure of power that it felt there was no further need to pretend that its main programme viz., Khadi, was mere famine relief and charity. There was no further need to hide the truth behind a veil of secrecy. The Congress had immense political power. Opposition there was none—no, not even a tiny twittering bleat. The temptation was strong to use the power to enforce its pet scheme of Khadi and cottage industries which is the central principle of Gandhism. It yielded to the temptation

and the result is the Prakasam plan to supplant the Mills by the Charkha. What the A. I. S. A. council did by stealth, by hole and corner methods, during the War, is now done by the Madras Ministry in broad daylight, without any attempt whatever to hide the objective, without any sense of shame at the renouncing of the plighted word of the Party. Orthodox Congressmen felt sure of their power and acted with courage. They imposed the ban. The ban was not only on the growth of Cotton Mills but on Rice Mills also! The Charkha programme gave up the pretence that it was non-party, non-political, and purely philanthropic; and it openly and unashamedly adopted violently aggressive methods. The goal was definitely announced that people in this country would be compelled either to clothe themselves in Khadi or to go naked. The Charkha was the Sun. Worship Him and spin, or perish! Khadi which took shape as the embodiment of non-violence has become an engine of ruthless Governmental oppression.

#### GANDHIAN WIND

My experience of khadi work recorded in this book indicates the genesis of the fearful change brought about in the khadi movement, from pretended charity to red-hot politics, from professed non-violence to ruthless oppression. The Mahatma began with going about the country, begging bowl in hand, to collect money for famine relief through the Charkha. He assured his political opponents that the money so collected would not be put to political uses. The first Congress Ministry of Madras gave a recurring grant of two lakhs per annum pledging its word on the floor of the Legislature that the grant would not be used for party purposes. But in the midst of the War, the Central Board of the A. I. S. A. threw away its non-political label and openly took part in politics. The no-tax campaign conducted by

the A. I. S. A. to hinder the allied War effort against Hitler was the straw which showed the direction of the Gandhian wind. The recent moves of the Madras Ministry are only the inevitable outcome of that strong gale from Wardha.

#### SATI

If there is life in Khadi, it will have a natural growth. Those interested in the development of Khadi should have allowed it to grow naturally without violent Governmental interference such as the one now proposed. These interferences are instigated, and indeed, have become necessary, just because Khadi does not grow naturally. The life has gone out of the Charkha which played a historic role in times past. The spinning wheel was invented by man at a certain stage of the development of his intelligence to meet a situation which then existed. He had a certain environment, he had certain needs, and he had certain resources, physical and mental. All these three features which were once very restricted have now changed out of all recognition. Nature has grown more bountiful and the raw material for clothing is not restricted to cotton; but fibres, rich in their colour scheme as well as in their structural variations, are now available to please every taste and to meet every need. The doctrine of self-sufficiency looks fantastic against the background of modern industrial development. One of the biggest textile producing countries in the world, Japan, whose competition was dreaded by Manchester, does not grow an ounce of cotton. Japan's Merchant Navy carried the raw produce from the remotest corners of the earth to feed her mills. Man's needs have changed in volume as well as in quality, made possible by the growth of science and technology. Even the villager is not content to go about with a loin cloth, provided, of course, he can secure more clothing. It is a common sight in India, children gaily decorated in European costume,

although adult men and women still stick to their dhoties and their saris out of sheer habit. All this has become possible because science has worked a revolution in the technique of textile production by the discarding of the Charkha and the installing of the Spinning 'Jenny. Nobody in the world before the advent of the Mahatma dreamed of reversing the direction of scientific progress. Nobody said that mankind should discard steel knives and take to stone knives, although the stone knife stands in the same relation to the metal knife as the Charkha does to the Spinning Jenny. The same arguments which are used to bolster up the Charkha will hold good in regard to the revival of flint knives too. We no longer wear the hides of animals or go about hunting with bows and arrows or eat raw meat, because science has increased our knowledge and given us power over our environment. The history of the march of Humanity through the centuries is a tale of the progressive enslavement of Nature by Man. Gandhi would not allow the dead Charkha to be buried or cremated. He believes in reviving the dead. In his grandiose attempt at revival, he would willingly sacrifice the industrial progress of this country. He would burn the mills in the funeral pyre and resuscitate the Charkha. Will modern India become a willing Sati and walk into the fire? That is the question, and the Youth of the country must furnish the answer. By strange and altogether illogical reasoning, the Mahatma attributes India's poverty to the advance of science simply because the latter happened to synchronise with the British conquest of India, not realising that Britain holds no monopoly over science which belongs to all humanity. Instead of utilising the latest discoveries in technology for abolishing hunger, disease and filth, the Mahatma has launched a crusade against science and has succeeded in yoking the might of political India to the prosecution of a hopeless war against world forces.



## PROSPERITY OR IMMOLATION

Let there be no mistake about my views or attitude. I admit that the Mahatma has played a great role, probably a decisive role, in waking up the mass mind of India to the evils of foreign domination and to the possibility of ending that domination. All the prestige which he now commands is due entirely to that role which he played. But while playing that role, he raised a cry which was wrong as well as irrelevant. The Charkha is the core of the Mahatma's philosophy and the spearhead of his campaign. The Charkha was doomed from the beginning. The question arises: how did it come about that the Mahatma succeeded by such an effete method? The answer to that question is that the Mahatma succeeded or rather, India succeeded, in gaining her political freedom because her cause was right and was so overwhelmingly strong that the technical mistakes of Gandhian leadership did not matter. The Indian freedom movement was such an avalanche that it would have swept away all the obstacles, blocks and mounds in its way, whether created by external forces or by internal mistakes. As I see it, but for the fault of Gandhian technique, we should have reached our goal ten years earlier. It is necessary for us to realise that the Mahatma did deliberately utilise the mighty forces of Indian Nationalism to foster his fad of reviving the Charkha. The respect we had for the National Leader induced us to put up with his fad till now, since it appeared to be comparatively harmless. But in the eventful days ahead when we shall have to utilise the new mechanism of the State to achieve not merely freedom but prosperity, we shall have to be resolute and not soft-hearted towards the weaknesses of the leadership. We owe it to the future generations of India that we do not build up a State which will be paralysed by the dead weight of the past instead of being energised by the hopes of the

future. Let us see to it that the rise of our freedom does not lead us to National immolation at the altar of the Charkha.

#### IGNORING THE FACTS

The facts detailed by me may be dry and uninteresting to the uninitiated reader who is not acquainted with the cross currents of Congress politics. But these facts relate to an experience which should be regarded in the same way as an experiment in a laboratory. The laboratory is not a romantic place. The multiplicity of restrictions and the limited quantities of samples available make the processes look insignificant but nevertheless conclusions of far reaching importance and theories of world devastating effect flow from such seemingly insignificant experiments. It is necessary, therefore, for anyone who feels a live interest in Indian politics to study this account of my experience. It may be that my experiment was faulty in its conduct. It may be that the conclusions I have drawn from it are not warranted by the facts. The scientific observer should keep himself alert to detect mistakes either in observation or in interpretation. But no responsible person can afford to ignore the experiment altogether. But that is just what the Mahatma has done. I sent copies of the first edition of this book to each member of the High Command of the Congress, and to each of the trustees of the All India Spinners' Association. Of the High Command, only Dr. Rajendra Prasad had the courtesy even to acknowledge receipt of the book, although he did not express any opinion on its contents. Shri Krishnadas Jaju, the General Secretary of the A. I. S. A., was good enough to write to me expressing his dissent from my conclusion, though he refused to be drawn into an argument about the matter. All the rest have preserved a stony silence. After repeated reminders, Pyarelal wrote that the Mahatma could

find no time to look into the book. So they have deliberately chosen to ignore the facts and the conclusions based on the facts I have presented to the public. They can afford to assume this lofty air as long as they can count upon the support of the Press in India which for its own selfish reasons has decided to install the Gandhian hierarchy in power.

### CROSS CURRENTS IN INDIAN POLITICS

Indian politics to-day is in a muddle: there is such confusion among the constituent elements that each is striking out blindly in supporting and opposing forces whose real value and direction have not been ascertained. To all outward appearances there are only two parties in the country, the Congress and the League, the Hindu and the Muslim, each arrayed against the other. All other parties and groupings have to come under the banner of one or the other of these two giants. The Hindu Sabha has been absorbed by the Congress which has stolen the Sabha's thunder. The Sikhs have come into the Congress fold for tactical reasons. The Christians and the Parsees who have been sitting on the fence, think it would be prudent for them to join the winning side which, they think, is the Congress now. The Scheduled Classes whom the force of circumstances drives towards the Muslim camp are yet weak and unable to pull their full weight. Their position is so desperate that many thinking heads among them already contemplate with equanimity a march *en masse* into the folds of the Islamic religion. If such a step materialises, there will be a flare-up and the entire Indian politics will be thrown into the cauldron. The Anglo-Indians feel neglected and despondent and think it is no use joining any party or putting up a fight at all for their rights. The Communists, who have been saddled with an exotic leadership and are unable to stand on their own legs, have condemned

themselves to an inferior position of subservience to the Congress. They hesitate to draw the conclusions which logic forces on them. They have extolled tactics to the detriment of their principles. The Royists and the Non-Brahmins seem to have been swept off the political map for the time being. There are sundry other elements of a local as well as of an all-India character who have not yet found their voices. But in all this variety and divergence, there is no life or drive except in the first two, namely, the Congress and the League. The Congress calls itself a nationalist party. The League make no bones about its communal, or rather religious, character. It is to all appearances the party of the Muslims. But is this the truth about the matter? Is the Congress nationalist and the League religious? To every one who takes the trouble to probe underneath the appearances of party labels, it will be apparent that the Congress is not a nationalist but a religious body, and the League is not a religious but a secular and essentially political organisation.

#### WHAT IS A HINDU?

It may be wrong to call the Congress a Hindu body, because the term Hindu is devoid of a definite doctrinal content such as is the case with the names of other religions like Christianity and Islam. A variety of practices and cults ranging from rank animism to extreme flights of pantheistic abstraction are huddled together under the term Hindu just because all these practices and cults are in fact found within the geographical frontiers of India. Indeed, the word Hindu is not of indigenous origin. It was coined by the Greeks to denote the people inhabiting the banks of the river Indus. Gradually, that word has come to denote the conglomeration of peoples inhabiting this peninsula who do not belong to any recognised faith like Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and

so on. While the word was used as a matter of convenience by foreigners, such use has worked havoc among the peoples of India by creating affinities without substance and conflicts without reason. The word has served as a means of exploitation by dominant groups like the Rajputs and the Maharattas who, time after time, have attempted to hold sway by instigating hatreds against Muslims. The word has also helped Muslim rulers to perpetuate their hold by exciting religious fanaticism among the Muslims against the non-Muslim masses.

#### CONGRESS RELIGION

It may be that there are some professed Muslims and certain people belonging to other religions within the Congress fold; and, therefore, the Congress cannot be said to be a purely Hindu religious body in the sense in which the word Hindu has been used. But in spite of it all, there is a core of religion penetrating the Congress. Before the Gandhian advent the Congress remained a political organisation gathering strength slowly but steadily with the growing political consciousness of the broad masses. Pre-Gandhian leadership of the Congress was essentially secular. But Gandhi exploited the political power of the Congress to spread his doctrine. Gandhism is a religion which has put on the political garb. I had hoped that Gandhism was a political philosophy, or rather methodology, which had a special application to the peculiar conditions obtaining in this country. But my hopes have been falsified. Instead of the method getting adjusted to the needs of the people, the people have been called upon to adjust themselves to the method which has been transformed into a creed. Gandhism is not politics in any sense and Congressmen, whatever their professed religion may be, have got to subject themselves to the faith and the discipline of the Gandhian creed. There seems to be no place inside the

Congress for persons who do not agree to put on the trappings of the new faith whether in their hearts they admit its validity or not. The formalities are enforced with unrivalled fanaticism and no quarter is shown to the unorthodox.

### SWEAR AND SWEAR

The end of World War Number Two finds India in the throes of a general upheaval. There is a burning desire to achieve immediate and unqualified national freedom and extrusion of all foreign influences. But among the Nationalists, only a section belongs to the Congress. Inside the Congress it is only a handful that has any real faith in the Gandhian creed. The majority of nationalists have not cared to analyse and understand the tenets of Gandhism. Among the few who have taken the trouble to do so, scarcely any can be found to agree with these tenets wholeheartedly. All the same, I admit, political India today is swearing by Gandhism. It swears, and swears. There need be neither conviction nor action behind swear words. It is expedient for the purpose of winning political influence, for victory in an election campaign and for preferment to Ministerial office, that one should pay lip homage to the Mahatma and his teachings. It is made plain that so long as this lip homage is rendered ungrudgingly one is free to pursue one's own inclinations in regard to one's actions. Of course, there are a few external trappings of political allegiance like wearing khadi, occasional spinning, the singing of *Ram Nam* etc., which are easily complied with by those who believe that the end justifies the means.

### NON-CONGRESS INDIA

The question arises as to what people should do who unfortunately do not agree with this creed, and who have conscientious objections to follow the royal road of hypocrisy

indicated for politicians in India. They may appear a small minority, but really they are the great majority of India, although voiceless to-day. Jinnah and Ambedkar are Nationalists. But they refuse to bow their heads to the new creed which does not appeal to their political sense. There are thousands of others among the intelligentsia who are in the same predicament since their minds and hearts rebel against a faith which they consider narrow and reactionary. What should these people do? The Congress which is the biggest political organisation is, at this crucial hour, not only dominated but monopolised by the Gandhites. There are no other platforms in the country commanding mass support which can accommodate such people except that of the Muslim League and the Scheduled Classes Federation which to all appearances speak with the voice of communalism. But let it be remembered that the totalitarian leadership of the Congress has left no other opening to Nationalists who cannot conscientiously subscribe to the Gandhian creed and who will not consent to lead the life of duplicity to which the vast majority of Congressmen have resigned themselves. Those of them who are happily born as Muslims or in one of the scheduled castes have the opportunity of joining the League or the Federation, at the risk of being called communalists. But what should those do who are unfortunately born in Non-Muslim communities which are not scheduled?

#### MANY WORLDS

Communalism may be wrong in itself; but is it so wrong that it has to be discarded if the alternative to it is the duplicity which is the present Congress? In politics, as in so much else in life, we have to choose the lesser evil, since the absolute good is always beyond our reach. I am not pleading for the perpetuation of communalism which in the

ultimate analysis is a conflict relating not to religion but to caste. Caste based on inequalities attached to birth is the notion which gave rise to Hitlerism in Europe, now suppressed—for the time being at any rate—at the cost of so much blood, sweat and tears in both the hemispheres. But caste is the central principle of Gandhism as I have endeavoured to show in this book. All the features of the creed, Charkha, village industries, basic education, Harijan uplift etc. point in one direction: the revival of the caste system which is getting atrophied owing to the progress of science and the spread of the machine civilization. The advent of the Mills and the Railways has done more to counteract caste than any other single feature of modern Indian life. The economics of the Indian village is built with the caste system as its foundation. The exodus from the village to the town, so much deplored by Gandhian politicians, is the natural development of the historic process of the dismemberment of caste by the time factor. The play of world forces upon the life of the people of this country has resulted in that exodus from village to town. It may be that this exodus will create new problems which may tax the brains of our politicians and our economists. But a turn back and a reversal of the historic process is not a brave solution of the problem but a cowardly avoidance of it. A world in travail cries out for International unity, for the abolition of political frontiers, for the suppression of narrow parochialism deified as Nationalism. But we, in India, revel in an attempt to split up society into warring units and conflicting economies. The message of the new world to India is to suppress and to control her resurgent Nationalism and to coalesce into the larger whole, the "One World" of which Wendell Wilkie wrote. But Gandhism mocks at this new world and struts about with the Charkha, the emblem of caste, imprinted on



its banner. The spinning programme and the revival of the handi-crafts aimed at the building up of the self-sufficient village will lead the country into an effort to recreate and to consolidate the caste system which has for centuries held a stranglehold upon the life of our people. Instead of co-operating in the creation of the new world for a free and united humanity, we in India are wasting our political energies in thwarting the birth of the new world. We hanker for the golden past which exists nowhere but in our diseased imagination. We take pride in reviving our primitive culture and in reversing the progressive historical processes.

#### VEGETABLE MEN

Let me hope that the new world will not take our antics seriously and that the mighty effort put up by humanity to get together will not be hindered by our eccentricities. Let me hope that while India may be a sufferer because of her intransigence and her exclusiveness, the world will not be seriously hurt by our unhelpful attitude. The ambassadors of free India, the representatives of our trade and cultural missions abroad, will go about foreign lands scantily dressed in handspun. They will excite the curiosity of onlookers by their loin cloth and other strange practices. Our representatives will look odd before foreigners. They will be unable to mingle in the social life of the world, because they will refuse to adapt their customs, their dress, and their food to the prevailing fashions of the rest of the world which is setting up a new and universal standard in regard to all such matters. Our non-cooperation with the world may be a small matter so far as the world is concerned which may well ignore us without much loss to itself. But it will be a big thing for us in India. Our people will be shut away from the fresh breath which enlivens the growth of other Nations. We

## EPILOGUE

shall live like frogs in the well, not knowing what is happening around us. We shall spin away our life time and shall be building self-sufficiency in our lives like the tree which shoots its roots underneath the ground and is immobile. Gandhism is the philosophy of the vegetable kingdom, each living unto itself, and not of the animal species to which humanity belongs and whose motif is movement, interpenetration, interdependence, cooperation, unity. It has never occurred to the Mahatma and to his Inner Circle that like all human beings they were also liable to err. They have never conceded that the principle behind the revival of the Charkha might be wrong. They have assumed a super human infallibility and are acting as though they were not only omnipotent, as they seem to be at present, but also omniscient.

### NOT WORLDLY WISE

The question remains as to what those people in India should do who are unfortunately not in a position to toe the line to the Gandhian hierarchy. Political realism demands that they should stand erect and fight the reaction at the risk of being called communalists. They know the truth that Gandhism is based on caste and perpetuates caste just to keep itself alive. They have no option but to risk the battle if they would be true to their convictions. They should endeavour to put down caste because it is the source of all communalism. The unpleasant task of unmasking the pseudo-Nationalism of the Gandhiite Congress, the revealing of its true basis and strength which is the caste system, must be undertaken. He is not a communalist who demands justice for the communities which unfortunately do exist in our country today. The real communalist is he who perpetuates the reign of caste under the cloak of Nationalism. People sometimes tell me that my attitude leads to nowhere. What is the use, they say, of breaking my head against the stone

wall of the Congress? There is no possibility of changing Congress leadership within a measurable distance of time. A prominent person who agreed with my view once told me that as long as the Mahatma lived (and may he live long!) and for ten years thereafter there would be no chance for anyone getting a hearing who is not in consonance with the Gandhian creed. Why do I not therefore adopt the easier course, so common in India to-day, and conform to the external formalities of Gandhism, a conformity which is the only gateway to a political career in this country? Kind friends flatter me that I might become anything I wanted by adopting this universal tactics which costs nothing but an occasional prick of conscience when one is in a reflective mood. But I have decided otherwise. I claim no credit for my decision. Perhaps no credit is due, since it is no virtue in a politician to be rational and consistent instead of being agile and nimble witted. I may not be practical and worldly wise. But I think it my duty to strive for a change in the principle and personality of Indian political leadership. There may be little chance of my object being fulfilled in the immediate or even remote future. But I think I should make the attempt, come what may.

#### CONGRESS IS LOYAL

People have lost hope of setting up an alternative platform either inside or outside the Congress. C. R. Das did it once inside the Congress and got away with it. He gave a new direction to Congress policy although he did not succeed in displacing the personnel of the leadership. After Das, his successor, Subhas Chandra Bose, made a similar attempt with similar results. While Das destroyed Gandhian non-cooperation, Bose removed root and branch the Gandhian idea of non-violence from the Congress, without in any way affecting the personal ascendancy of the Mahatma in the

Congress. It is very funny that in our country leaders shed their principles without loss of prestige. Our politics is skin deep. We care more for personalities than for principles. The Khilafat agitation was a tremendous failure in its immediate as well as in its ultimate object. The Khilafat was lost and destroyed without any hope of redemption. Hindu-Muslim unity, which was the ultimate goal, was not only *not* achieved but the gulf that separated the two communities was further widened and today the Muslims insist upon a partition of the country. People continue to talk of non-cooperation and non-violence as though those ideas still hold sway. But everybody knows, including those who are closest to the Mahatma, that they have been superseded and consigned to the limbo of the forgotten, if not of the forsworn. The two great attempts to displace Gandhian leadership resulted in depriving the creed of its substance, while at the same time, tightening up the rigours of external formalities thus making it easier for a larger number of people to sail under the Gandhian banner. The attempts to reform the Congress from within have ended in increasing the number of nominal worshippers at the shrine of the Mahatma. As a matter of fact, Gandhi today is bigger than the Congress. He does not owe any allegiance to the Congress of which, as he has repeatedly proclaimed, he is not even a four anna member. On the other hand, it is the Congress which owes allegiance to Gandhi. It has to meet where Gandhi chooses to be at the moment, whether it be at Ahmedabad, Wardha, Poona, Juhu, Panchgani, or even distant Noakhali. Time and again, it has passed resolutions affirming loyalty to his person in terms the most undignified. Such a state of affairs does not constitute democracy but the very opposite, totalitarian dictatorship, or what is worse, going back to primitive ideas of kingship, of the personal ruler who reigns

by divine right and can do no wrong. The Gandhian regime is monopolistic and exclusive and will not permit the growth of rival parties which may one day replace it. When Congress comes into power, it will impose the Gandhian creed on the people of India and will drill them into a monotonous uniformity *a la* Hitler. There will be no chance for our people to exercise their political function in the manner in which it is exercised elsewhere in the world by putting in power that political party whose principles are suited to the actual situation in the country at the time, whose leaders are congenial to and in sympathy with the emotions and needs of the people concerned, and by withdrawing from political power and influence that party which has outgrown its usefulness. Congress leaders of to-day will be rulers holding permanent and undisplaceable sway like the kings of old and neither responsible nor responsive to public opinion. The huge propaganda machinery at the disposal of the Government will be mobilised for a total effort to kill all opposition and to make it appear as though the mere *ukase* of the Party machine is the freely expressed will of the people.

#### LEFTISTS

What Das and Bose failed to achieve was beyond the reach of others who could not command a tithe of the resources and influence that were available to those two great men. There was no likelihood, therefore, of any individual or group inside the Congress succeeding in a rebellion against the High Command. I do not ignore the existence of the Congress Socialists who profess to have a revolutionary platform of action and who desire to function in rivalry, if not in antagonism, to the present leadership. Time was when, before the outbreak of the World War, they promised to act in unison with the Communist Party and the Revists.

in drawing the country in the direction of Socialism and away from the medievalist capitalism to which the Congress was committed. As a purely tactical measure, these three leftist groups continued in the Congress, hoping by their very existence inside it to drive the organisation towards the left. But the outbreak of the World War shook political parties in India, as elsewhere, to their very foundations. Political policies could not, during that crisis, be based on mere tactical considerations which were too meagre and too superficial to meet the cataclysm of the universal upsurge of that War. Parties had to lay bare their fundamentals and were forced to ally themselves with the one or with the other of the two opposing forces denoted by the rival camps of the Democratic Allies and the Fascist Axis. In spite of its grandiloquent professions of sympathy with the Democracies and its hatred of Fascism, the Indian National Congress, after much wobbling, finally aligned itself with the Axis powers in August, 1942. It was a trying time for the three leftist groups inside the Congress. The Congress Socialists not only went the whole hog in accepting the August resolution but in fact took the lead in putting that resolution into practice. Such happenings as took place in the country as the result of the August resolution were directly or indirectly traceable to the activities of the Congress Socialists. During that critical period the High Command kept on disowning all responsibility for the various acts of violence perpetrated with a view to sabotage the War effort of the Government. At the beginning of the War, the Communists in India, as in other parts of the world, were torn between their loyalty to Russia, which was their spiritual Fatherland and their innate hatred of Fascism. They stood confounded when Hitler concluded a pact with Russia. The subsequent annulment of the pact enabled the Indian Communists ultimately to go over to the

side of the Democracies and play a decisive part in the struggle which brought about the overwhelming defeat of the Axis. The small group of Royists adopted a theoretically correct attitude in regard to the War. But they were organisationally weak and the end of the War found them practically non-existent as a political force. The struggle to reform the Congress from within has thus ended in total failure. Of the three groups which attempted to reform the Congress, the Socialists abandoned their leftist position and went over to the opposite camp under cover of fighting the rightist policy of non-violence. Whether non-violence is the policy of the right or of the left, the fact is beyond question that it has to-day been utterly destroyed and given up except on formal occasions intended to assuage the tender feelings of the Mahatma. The very success of the Socialists in fighting non-violence has brought them over from the left and firmly established them on the right. The wobblings of the Communists have cost them dear, and they have been forcibly ejected from the Congress fold.

#### NOT INSIDE?

It has been demonstrated that it is almost impossible to reform the Congress from within. The leadership has such a strong hold upon the organisation that whatever failures and disasters may overtake it, it cannot be evicted from its dominant position. Indeed, its very failures have been boosted as fresh victories for its policies! The general elections in 1946 have shown how easily the Indian masses can be bamboozled into the belief that even a disastrous defeat is a resounding victory. The Congress High Command made clever use of the grievous blunder committed by the Military authorities in enacting the tragi-comedy of the I. N. A. trials in the Red Fort at Delhi. Alive or dead, Subhas Chandra Bose

was the hero of that drama and, if any benefit were to accrue out of the blunder committed in the holding of that trial, that benefit should go to the Forward Bloc which is the expression of the political ambition of Subhas Chandra Bose. But today the Forward Bloc is nowhere on the political map of India. The Congress leadership exploited the discomfiture of the Military authorities by posing as the heirs of the heroic Bose. Anyone with a knowledge of the history of Indian politics knows that their relationship with Bose was that of the hangman with the victim. But it is a remarkable fact that Congress leaders have appropriated all the credit to themselves leaving the Forward Bloc, the real heirs of Bose, to flounder in the backwaters of politics. It is therefore plain that so long as a party or group remains inside the Congress, its achievement, whatever it may be, in opposition to the leadership which is a permanent fixture, will redound to the credit not of the party or group which achieves it but to the leadership against whom it is achieved.

#### NEW LEADERSHIP

The logic of the situation seems to demand that any attempt to re-orientate Indian politics or to counteract the reactionary tendencies of Congress leadership must erect its platform of action outside, and not inside, the Congress camp. But the attempt, whether made from inside or outside the Congress, has undoubtedly its hardships. It will have to brave the strong current of popular feeling and wage relentless war against the monopolist Press which is exploiting the influence of the Congress to further its own aggressive purposes. But the attempt will have to be made, and I trust that it will be made sooner or later. The issue raised by the convening of the Constituent Assembly, the formation of the Interim Government, the growing communal



tension in all the Provinces, the gathering strength of the conflict between Capital and Labour, the world wide landslide away from the rightist tendencies turning peoples' attention towards revolutionary action—all these are pointers that the hold of the Congress over the people of India will not endure for very long. The people are almost ready to break away from the moorings of this leadership which it regards as effete and senile and unsuited to tackle with vigour the clamant problems of the present time. Youth is impatient. After all, the glamour of Swaraj, of the Complete Independence of India, of separation from the British connection, is gone with the re-establishment of popular Ministries in the provinces and the advent of Congress-cum-League Government at the centre. The world has arrived at a stage of development when it has become impossible for one nation to hold down another except with the latter's willing acquiescence. Britain has realised that it will not pay her any longer to rule over India, and Britain in all her long history has never done any thing which did not put money into her pocket. The Congress objective of complete Independence has been all but achieved and practically ceases to have any further meaning. The burning issue before the people is: What shall we make of our Independence, of our newly acquired power not only to rule over ourselves but to influence the destiny of the world? The new issue has brought to the fore social and economic relationships which have till now lain buried or dormant under the influence of the foreign domination or have put on false robes of religion and community. The old leadership does not understand the new situation and is incompetent to deal with it. If it does not voluntarily yield place to the new ideology of world fellowship based upon equality and the denial of *varnashram* and caste, it will

have to be deliberately put down and sent into retirement. The country's youth must speak out in a manner which would compel its liquidation. Too long has youth looked up to elders and sacrificed its higher and better nature. It is time now in the interest of India, nay, in the interest of humanity, that youth should assert itself.

#### YOUTH THE ONLY HOPE

In conclusion, I wish to refer to one prevailing method of avoiding the difficult task of organising the fight against reaction. People freely admit the validity of all or most of what I have said against the rule of the High Command. But, they say that my criticism is correct in regard only to the personal opinion and beliefs of the Mahatma. The Congress will follow the Mahatma only up to a point. The younger leaders, and particularly Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, do not go the whole hog in the denunciation of science and machinery. The younger leaders, when they come to power, will, according to these friends, allow free play to the progressive tendencies of modern science. The Mahatma may pronounce his sentence of death on the mills; but, depend upon it, urge the friends, Nehru will send the reprieve. I have to point out that all this is wishful thinking. It is merely a display of escapism in the face of a difficult situation. The Mahatma makes much of Nehru's description of Khadi as "the livery of freedom". It is difficult to say what Nehru thinks about the whole matter. In his recent book "The Discovery of India" Nehru has managed to say exactly nothing through a maze of words running to over 800 pages. Nehru has a heavy responsibility as the lineal successor of the Mahatma. His own personal convictions will count for nothing in the moulding of events which will be pre-determined for him by the mighty current of Gandhism. He will,

no doubt, serve as the Master of Ceremonies, but the course and goal of the ceremonies have been determined for him long ago and he will have little power to alter them. I say this with great sorrow because my faith in him was once very strong, and I almost swore by him. He represented to me all that was good in the West, trying to remould the East to my and many another man's heart's desire. But the tactical mistakes that he committed during the War have created in him an inferiority complex and a thirst for power which prevent him from playing the revolutionary role for which he is otherwise so eminently fitted. The young radical has grown up into the elder statesman, inevitably turning towards the right and away from his earlier leftist moorings. I do not hope, therefore, that either Nehru or any other member of the Congress High Command will be able to stem the tide of Gandhism which is fast sweeping the industrial growth of India into oblivion. The reckless assaults of the Madras Ministry at the vital spots of South India's economic life have evoked no protest from any important leader of the Congress. There are, of course, rumblings of a revolt amongst the rank and file, but the revolt will be suppressed by the might of party discipline. Gandhi will have his way, and Nehru and the others will have to trek behind him if they would maintain their positions of power. The only hope of rational action lies therefore in the country's youth which has not yet been corrupted by the taste of office and which should have the courage to follow its convictions, however unpleasant and difficult it may be to do so at the moment. To Youth I appeal, to the young men and women of India, to organize themselves betimes, and place India's feet firmly on the path of progress, and of economic and social regeneration.

THE END

## SAID IN 1931

*Things seem to move in a circle in our country. At any rate, my political experiences of two decades have brought me back to the position from which I started. I give below extracts from a controversy in the newspapers carried on in the middle of 1931 soon after I left khadi service. It is a sad thought that I seem to express the very same ideas in practically identical language after the lapse of sixteen years*

### EXTRACTS FROM THE SPEECH BY S. RAMANATHAN AT LALGUDI ON THE 31st MAY 1931

Khadi is thoroughly unsound in theory. Rank individualism is at the root of the Khadi programme. Hand-spinning implies in theory, not merely the discarding of cotton mills but the rejection of all machinery. To realise the dream of a poetical society without machinery, everybody working to satisfy his own needs without depending upon the labours of anybody else, to realise that ideal, you must go back through the ages to the primitive times when man fraternised with Nature and went naked through the forest hunting with bows and arrows. Civilization is but the process of transforming men who lead individual disconnected lives into a society of men who lead a collective life each toiling for the sake of others and each enjoying the fruits of the labours of others. I do not think that if you had the choice you would like to go back to the life of primitive individualism. The austere, self-sufficient, self-absorbent individualist is hardly a likeable being. We like some people to depend on us and we like to depend on some people. Human lives interdepend, they interpenetrate; hence their beauty, hence their joy.

And can we discard machinery? Machinery is the fruit of the progress of science and science is the off-shoot of

human intelligence. Scientific discoveries are not the monopoly of any nation. They are the common heritage of all humanity. Can we throw off our heritage and yet live? Surely not. If we make the attempt, we are bound to go under in the struggle for existence. Machinery is a necessary feature of human life in the present age. If we are petulant and discard machinery, we shall simply cease to exist. Indians will become extinct as a nation. In my humble opinion, Mahatma Gandhi's leader-ship is driving India towards the catastrophe of national self-immolation.

#### CHARGES AGAINST MACHINERY

What are the charges levelled against machinery? It is said that machinery has created the present economic crisis of low commodity value by over production. It is alleged that machinery has created unemployment. If you examine these arguments you will find that they do not hold water. The present economic crisis is not due to overproduction but to unequal distribution. The crisis calls for a reform of the current monetary system which has grown defective. The growing un-employment in several parts of the world is not caused by the introduction of machinery. It is due to the faulty use we have made of machinery. If the introduction of a particular machinery makes it possible for ten men working ten hours a day to do the work which was done by fifty men working the same number of hours per day before the machinery was introduced, what is the reasonable course to adopt? We should not employ only ten men and turn out the remaining forty into the streets. We should rather continue to employ all the fifty but only make them work two hours each. The remaining 8 hours should be made available to the workmen for recreation, study and self improvement. The present economic system which has created private property in machinery for the wealthy few.

at the root of the tremendous problem of unemployment that is facing not only India but the whole world today. If we reconstruct society so that machinery is made to function for the benefit of the many and not for the profit of the few, we shall find machinery to be a great blessing. The evil consists in our not having yet learnt to use machinery in the proper manner. Let me illustrate my meaning. The pen-knife in your pocket is a useful implement. You find a hundred uses for it everyday. But it is just possible you may one day go crazy and cut your throat with it. If you do that it will not prove that pen-knives are evil. It will only prove that your mind has gone out of alignment and you require treatment at a mental hospital.

#### MECHANISING AGRICULTURE

Similarly with machinery and the economic system which utilises it. The economic system has grown top-heavy, it is beginning to topple down. Let us set ourselves to the task of economic reconstruction so that society may find its balance. It is idle to cavil at machinery. I would ask you to open your eyes wide and look at the many countries in the world where machinery is making headway. Agriculture, the most primitive of human industries is fast becoming mechanised. America is leading the way in machine farming. The tractor and the steel plough have eliminated ninety per cent of the drudgery in agriculture. Harvesters and threshers are preventing waste in the gathering of crops. In Italy they are using machinery for such a complicated process as transplanting rice-plants. Russia is one great object lesson in the possibilities of collective farming with the aid of mechanical means. In England, the Prime Minister, Mr. Mac Donald, has on the anvil a scheme for the introduction of large scale farming. Look at that picture and at this, the tractor and the takli, the one transforming

a primitive and tiresome industry into one of modern ease and comfort, the other reverting a highly advanced industry back to primitive hardship and laboriousness. Which do you think is the more humane process? You all know the wooden plough. I have often acted as the plough-boy in my village and can speak with first hand knowledge. I tell you no greater cruelty can be inflicted on an animal than by yoking it to the plough especially in our irrigated fields. The sight of bullocks being goaded by boys who are themselves struggling knee-deep in the mire challenges description. Often the bullocks, finding themselves unequal to the task, lie down prostrate and perform Satyagraha. The plough-boys grow desperate, twist the tails of the animals and begin to bite them. I shall not go any further into the lurid details but I ask you, will you not feel glad if all this horror can be avoided and if the same land can be ploughed by a machine like the motor car driven by you with all the ease and comfort with which you drive the motor car? I would inform you that such ease in mechanical ploughing is not a distant possibility but an actuality and it is up to every one of you to realise it, if you have the enterprise for it. To bring in the tractor and all the mechanical ease which the tractor implies, you must throw off the takli. You must throw off not only the takli but also the spirit that has brought the takli into being. You must throw off your sulking fear of machinery. Undoubtedly machinery has its dangers. But we are no cowards. Let us prove ourselves men. Let us be masterful and learn to enslave the machine.

*Doctor Pattabhi Sitaramayya who was the head of the Khadi Organisation in the Andhra Province took up the challenge contained in the above speech and wrote a letter to the Press in defence of khadi. The following are extracts from the letter.*

*Dr. PATTABHI'S REPLY*

It is too late in the day to attack the cult of Khaddar on fundamentals. But, the criticism offered by a gentleman of Mr. Ramanathan's position in life compels attention where otherwise it should have gone unnoticed. The very claims put forward by Mr. Ramanathan of his association with the movement, active participation in it and his eye-opening discoveries are such as will easily take the ordinary reader off his feet. That is the reason why an attempt is made now to answer the criticism point by point.

*KHADDAR AND MACHINERY*

Hand-spinning, he says, implies in theory, not merely the discarding of cotton mills but the rejection of all machinery. He then describes what civilization is and how it is "a process of transforming men who lead individual disconnected lives into a society of men who lead a collective life." These two points may be taken together. Machinery is not discarded altogether by the cult of Khaddar. It has been mentioned times without number that Khaddar is meant to provide an accessory occupation to people who have plenty of leisure and no means of earning and no food. It is not meant for the lawyer that makes thousands by the month, although he too may and must practice sacramental spinning. It is not meant for the young brat that fetches a taxi for a Vakil to the High Court in the evening and pockets a bright silver quarter of a rupee for the trouble. It is meant for the widowed and the maimed and the blind and the women who have no work at home and who can easily have an anna a day by a piece of work which is simple, easy, and to that extent, paying. It is not a small addition to the income of an individual whose average income in India is a little over that. Khaddar discards machinery to the extent that Khaddar



is involved, and also to the extent that food and raiment are involved. What disasters follow when one country depends upon another for food and raiment are to be seen every day.

#### ENRICHES BOMBAY MILLIONAIRE.

Yes, Civilization is collective life but a collective life not ruled by competition but one, as Mr. Ramanathan fondly hopes, in which "each toils for the sake of others and each enjoys the fruits of the labour of others." Now, frankly, I would ask anybody to lay his hand on his heart and say whether the so-called Civilization of the West with all its machinery, industrialism, production for export, quest of markets, imperialism, wars and economic disasters is based upon competition or the kind of co-operation which Mr. Ramanathan visualises. If the latter had been the case, one should have had no quarrel with machinery or industrialism. But it is not so. The modern Civilization is essentially based upon the principle of competition in which the weaker go to the wall, in which the rich become richer and the poor poorer, and in which to him that hath more will be given and from him that hath not the little that he hath will be taken away. Now take the dress of a man. Let us say it is worth Rs. 3/-, one rupee representing cotton, one rupee representing spinning and one rupee representing weaving roughly. Cotton remains in any case in our country. Suppose the cloth is mill-spun-mill-woven or mill-spun-hand-woven or hand-spun-hand-woven. In the first case the Rs. 2/- representing spinning and weaving goes to the Bombay mill and millionaire. In the second case one rupee of the two rupees goes to the Bombay millionaire and one rupee to the village weaver. In the last case the Rs. 2/- will entirely go to the village spinner, to the village weaver, to the village ginner, to the village carder, to the village printer and the village dyer.

### WHAT IS OUR DUTY

Now in a country where 7 crores are starving on one meal a day according to the Western calculations, what is our duty? To make the hundred millionaires of India richer or to pay for an extra grain of food into the starving stomachs of your neighbours who have been thrown out of their occupation by the British Government and their imported cloth? The answer is obvious: the Western Civilization based upon machinery is not a corporate life based on a co-operative principle but a life of struggle based upon fierce competition leading to sky scrapers, and next door to it, rank squalor and destitution. Ours is a Civilization based upon co-operation which wishes well to all and prays "sarveha Jana Sukhina Bhavanthu" morning and evening. Machinery has its place in life but not to displace artistic crafts, it has its place to lift weights, to crush stones, to clear distances, to save labour, in a word, machinery is essential but let it not invade the sacred domain of cloth both for economic and artistic reasons and above all for ethical reasons. Craft life is based upon the preservation of the home, in fact, upon the promotion of a sense of ownership in the craftsman, upon the perpetuation of his trained skill and artistic instinct in the craft of ages that he practices and above all upon the conserving of the sanctity of the home and its morals. It promotes creative energy and gives man the joy of making wholes not parts, of being an artist not a mechanic, of being a master not a cooly. Civilization as it is understood to-day is City-i-zation and is for that very reason alien to the spirit of 85% of people that live in villages.

### MECHANIZATION OF AGRICULTURE

Mr. Ramanathan proceeds to examine the allegation made against machinery, namely, that it has created unemployment. He does not deny the charge but alters the

remedy. To him there is no "over production" but "unequal distribution." He frankly admits that "unemployment is due to the faulty use we have made of machinery." Faulty or faultless, there it is. But his remedy is worth examining. He says "if by the introduction of machinery the work of 50 men working 10 hours a day is carried on by 10 men working the same time, the remedy for the mill-owner is not to throw the 40 people out of employment, but to engage all the fifty to work only for 2 hours." This remedy is no better than working the 50 spinning wheels instead of working a machine loom, if at all it is not worse. We have yet to come across a millowner who will answer the call of Mr. Ramanathan, of a mill-hand who will accept his prescription of only working two hours a day. Even according to Mr. Ramanathan, society has to be reconstructed on Western lines with machinery but subject to Eastern principles of workmen regulating their own life by a self-denying ordinance. The latter the craftsman was doing in ancient times through Craft-Guilds but the former is regulated by Trade-Unions and to say that Craft-Guilds and the principles guiding them control the Trade Unions is hundred times more impossible than to set wheels in motion and get your hand products through the interminable man power that is available in this country. As for mechanisation of Agriculture I have no quarrel with Mr. Ramanathan, if he thinks he can try the experiment but I thought that steel ploughs and motor tractors were not for Indian soil or for Indian climate wherein you have to turn up only the upper 9" of the soil in order to bring into play the nitrifying organisms. However, that is not a point germane to our discussion.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF MILLS

Mr. Ramanathan speaks of Irrigation Districts *versus* Dry Districts. Perhaps his statement is broadly true. But it

must be stated that wet districts are even more deft in spinning than dry districts and that the lowering of the price of paddy has once again revived interest even in wet districts in regard to Khaddar. But, really, while dry districts work for wages, wet districts are promising to become self-spinning areas and that is saying a good deal. I am sorry that Mr. Ramanathan is out of touch with the developments that have been taking place recently in regard to Khaddar production. The prices have appreciably fallen while the quality has appreciably risen. And while it is easy to develop the machinery of the Charka in order to bring out finer yarn or more yarn and therefore cloth, the fact must be remembered that any complication in the way of machinery introduced into the Charka is apt to make the people throw it aside when it is out of gear.

Mr. Ramanathan speaks of developing the mills in the country. There are 344 mills now at work supplying perhaps one third of the needs of India. The average cost of a mill is 40 lakhs of rupees. Its output is 5,000 lbs. a day equivalent to 15,000 yards, i. e. a day's output is enough to clothe 1,000 people per annum. At this rate 1,050 mills are required for India, that is to say, each district has to put up now between two and three mills in addition. Let Mr. Ramanathan think of his richest district, Tanjore, and tell us whether Tanjore is able to put in a crore. We shall not go into the question whether even if the capital is put together the machinery bought will be up-to-date, whether the mill can market its goods in less than 10 years, whether the whole machinery will not become effete by that time; for, Mr. Ramanathan himself will admit that every day Western science is proceeding fast apace and is making new inventions and discoveries which make the preceding day's machinery out of date and whether the mill put up under these conditions in India can compete with the long established, well financed, widely advertised mills of the West. Really, it is the advocates of machinery and mills that advocate the competition of the single bullock cart with the motor car, not the advocates of the Charkha and Khaddar.

### A REJOINDER TO Dr. PATTABHI

By S. RAMANATHAN

Once upon a time we, Madrasis, were famed for our argumentativeness. Mahatma Gandhi once called us hair-splitters. But that was in the unregenerate days prior to Non-co-operation. Now there is an atmosphere of hush-hush all around. The ardour for political freedom has destroyed the right to think. An attempt to discuss the merits of Khadi is considered a sacrilege. This imprisonment of the intellect goes ill with a movement for national emancipation. Hence I am glad that Dr. Pattabhi Sitharamayya has taken up the defence of Khadi. I am thankful for the light that is vouchsafed—albeit, it comes from Andhra. As head of the Andhra Provincial Khadi Organisation Dr. Pattabhi is in full possession of the facts relating to Khadi. He is the brain of politically minded Andhra and Khadi cannot secure an astuter advocate to expound its cause.

Dr. Pattabhi thinks "it is too late in the day to attack the cult of Khaddar." Is it? Is it ever too late to discover the truth? Is it ever too late to retrace a false step? We have allowed over ten years for Khadi to work out its implication. We have given the Charkha a reasonable trial. Is it not high time that we gather the achievements and evaluate the results?

#### PLACE OF MACHINERY

The central point in the discussion relates to our attitude towards machinery. What is the place of machinery in the future envisaged by the Khadi advocate? Dr. Pattabhi's statement on this matter is somewhat halting. He says: "Machinery is not discarded altogether by the cult of Khaddar." "Khaddar discards machinery to the extent that artistic industries are involved." "Machinery has its place to lift weights, to crush stones, to clear distances, to save labour." If a leader of the eminence of Dr. Pattabhi is unable to be clear on this question, the amount of confusion in the minds of the people at large can easily be imagined. "To the extent that artistic industries are involved." This is quite comprehensive. All hand-made articles are claimed

by some to be artistic. Before the advent of the machine, every industry was hand-made and was therefore artistic. There are no non-artistic industries. In this sense, Khadi excludes all machinery. "Machinery has its place to save labour." If Dr. Pattabhi accepts all machinery that "saves labour" he can hardly refuse any machinery. There is no machine that does not "save labour". Dr. Pattabhi is hard put to it to find a place for machinery in his scheme of things. Logically there is no place for machinery alongside of Khaddar. The two are mutually exclusive. This is quite apparent when, later on in his letter, Dr. Pattabhi launches on a general tirade against machinery, forgetting his earlier attempt to give scope to machinery though within a strictly limited sphere.

Dr. Pattabhi runs away with the idea that machinery is the enemy of art. I do not deny that the design in hand-made articles is artistic. But I desire to point out that the design in every hand-made article is not original or creative. Not every handicraftsman was an artist. There were the master workmen who invented the designs. They were the real artists. Their industrious assistants who copied the designs were as much subject to dull monotony as the labourer in the modern mill. Nor does the machine abolish the necessity for designing or for art. Only, it transfers the operation from the shop to the laboratory.

Dr. Pattabhi objects to the machine civilization because it effects the "city-i-zation" of the vast rural population of India. The question is, how long will India remain rural if Dr. Pattabhi allows free scope to the machine "to clear distances." The introduction of modern means of communication is gradually abolishing the distinction between the town and the country. The world, and with it India, is being rapidly transformed into one vast garden city.

#### IMPERIALISM AND CAPITALISM

Dr. Pattabhi speaks with vehemence against Imperialism, wars, economic exploitation, competition for markets, I entirely agree with every word of Dr. Pattabhi in this behalf. But I beg to point out to Dr. Pattabhi that his

tirade misses the point because he uses a loose terminology. He confounds Imperialism, Capitalism and Competition with Civilization, Science and Machinery. The utilisation of science and machinery has no necessary connection with the capitalist organisation of industry. Machine-civilization is not synonymous with Capitalism and Land-lordism. Before the advent of the machine there was Capitalism and Land-lordism. If Dr. Pattabhi succeeds in abolishing machinery he would not have put an end to the wars and the exploitation. On the contrary, he would have given them greater scope for increasing their activity. Handicrafts are congenial soil for the growth of economic enslavement. The machine is our ally in the fight against Imperialism and Autocracy.

#### CHERIS

Dr. Pattabhi has referred to the riches of Tanjore district. The riches of Tanjore, whatever they are, are not machine made although there is enough wealth in that district to find more than the one crore that Dr. Pattabhi requires from it for the development of mills. Leaving aside the Mirasdars, half-a-dozen of whom can from among themselves furnish the quota required, I can name several temples and mutts each of whose wealth will be adequate to the founding of a mill. But Dr. Pattabhi need not be alarmed. The machine has not yet invaded the fields of the Cauvery delta. The wooden plough worked by bullock power still holds absolute sway. The primitive spade with which Adarr delved is still in the ascendant. I invite Dr. Pattabhi to a tour round the Tanjore villages. Let him visit the Cheris where the artistic handicraftsmen live their life beautiful, and let him tell me whether the worst slums produced by the machine-civilization anywhere in the world can beat these Cheris in "the richest district" for their dirt, their squalor, their poverty and their diseases. What is at the root of all this horror, of all this misery? Not machinery. Not even the foreign domination. It is that unjust social structure which has recognised private property in land and has divided the people into the rich and the poor, the "haves" and the "have-nots". If our desire to put an end to this

state of affairs is at all genuine, we must gird up our loins to fight this monster of Capitalism. I grant this task is stupendous. But a beginning must be made by those who see their light clearly. At any rate there is an obligation on us to keep clear of nostrums and not to delude the common people by crying hoarse over quack remedies.

#### WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Dr. Pattabhi grows eloquent in his condemnation of "Western Civilization". I crave permission to tell him that he is fighting a Chimera. There is no such thing as a "Western Civilization." The progress of mankind is a unitary process. Only the different sections of humanity, owing to historical reasons, are at different stages of development. By "Western Civilization" Dr. Pattabhi really means the civilization that is based on science and machinery. This technological civilization rests fundamentally on power driven machinery. Science, in all its branches is its servant. This "Western Civilization" is only about two centuries old. The "West" two hundred years ago was on all fours with the "East" of today. There were the self same feudalism, religious fanaticisms and, of course, the handicrafts that please Dr. Pattabhi's heart. Medieval Europe enjoyed that machineless millenium in which we of modern India are basking. Handicrafts belong to the childhood of the race. For better or for worse, India is gradually attaining to maturity. She is beginning to understand the processes of science and the machine. To oblige her to sit at the Charkha any longer would be as ridiculous as putting Dr. Pattabhi at a go-cart or expecting him to dally with a doll. There can be no going back upon the evolution of human institutions. We shall neither surrender nor retreat. We have no need to fear. The vision ahead is full of promise. The machine envisages a prospect of life on higher levels, more emancipated from vain endeavours and conquerable sufferings.

#### OBSOLETE MACHINERY

I confess my inability to understand Dr. Pattabhi's objection to the founding of new mills in our country. He



says that a new mill cannot market its goods in less than ten years and by that time the machinery would have become obsolete because scientific inventions are proceeding at so fast a pace that the previous day's discovery is out of date or the succeeding day. If Dr. Pattabhi is speaking the fact how do people elsewhere in the world do at all establish new mills? I can understand obsolete machinery being an argument against the old, "long established" mills. New mills begin with more up-to-date features than the old mills and hence have the advantage over the old mills. Dr. Pattabhi has reversed the facts. Even the old mills are able to pull on and thrive because they go on incorporating the new discoveries and scrapping old obsolete machinery as fast as they can. The new mills in India should do the same and can do the same much more easily than the old mills because they are less burdened with obsolete machinery.

#### TRACTOR IN THE INDIAN SOIL

Dr. Pattabhi thinks that the tractor will not suit Indian soil and the Indian climate. It is this notion that India is not like any other country and that Indians are being apart from the rest of humanity that is at the root of our backwardness. How did the Railways suit our soil? How did the aeroplanes stand our climate? Dr. Pattabhi says that in India we require "to turn up only the upper 9" of the soil in order to bring into play the nitrifying organisms. That is exactly what has to be done in every other country under the sun. That is exactly what the tractor is intended to accomplish. Dr. Pattabhi may rest assured that the tractor will come and that the tractor will thrive in our country even as other machinery have come and have thrived here. India is part of the world and Indians are part of humanity. There is nothing that is good for the West that is not good also for the East. Science is annihilating the distance that has kept the East apart from the West. The wide seas do no longer separate and the high mountains do no longer divide. They serve as bonds to unite the two wings of the great brotherhood of humanity.

content to leave the reader to do the thinking. The author says that these startling facts he has revealed are no secrets. But nobody has acknowledged them yet; because, Indians have a split personality, a psychological complex, born out of centuries of political subjugation by an alien power. This book gives a moving account of the emotional crisis which overtakes every cultured Indian in his struggle with an environment which is a strange mix up of the primitive and the modern, the superstitious and the philosophical, the parochial and the cosmopolitan. Besides being provocative and controversial the book is of absorbing human interest. It is a revelation of the workings of the mind of the Indian Youth and of the Indian Intelligentsia.